

Lafayette French, Sr.
(1848 – 1912)

&

Lafayette French, Jr.
(1887 - 1944)

A. Lafayette French, Sr.

Lafayette French, Sr. was a prominent trial lawyer in southern Minnesota from the 1870s to his death on November 6, 1912. Aside from stints as county attorney in the late 1870s and mayor of Austin from 1885 to 1887, he eschewed elective office, preferring life in the courtroom.

In a memorial to French published in the *Proceedings of the State Bar Association* in 1913, Samuel A. Catherwood, a friend and frequent adversary, estimated that “[i]n the last thirty years he has doubtless tried more jury cases than any lawyer now living, in Minnesota.” Earlier, in a front page article on November 6, 1912, the *Austin Weekly Herald* carried the recollections of local lawyers, including Catherwood, who noted a detail about French at work that helped build the man’s mystique: “He possessed a memory that was a marvel, used no memoranda in the trial of a lawsuit, and seldom made notes of any facts or incidents during the course of a trial....” One fact, however, may help lawyers today appreciate his prominence in the bar a century ago: every member of the Minnesota Supreme Court—except Chief Justice Charles M. Start who was ill—attended the funeral of Lafayette French.

I.

The following profile of French appeared in *History of Mower County, Minnesota* published in 1884:

Lafayette French, one of the prominent attorneys of Austin, is a native of the “Buckeye” State, having been born in Loraine county, Ohio, November 19th, 1848, and was educated at Oberlin and Hiram Colleges. While in the junior year at Hiram College, he accepted a position as teacher in one of the public schools. After teaching [79] about a year and a half he resigned his position on account of poor health, and returned to Ohio, and began the study of law at Camden, near Oberlin, with Boynton and Heath. His health improving he returned to St. Louis and assumed the principalship of one of the public schools of that city. At the end of one year he entered the law office of Judge Holt of that city, and was admitted to the bar in 1870. He came to Austin and engaged in the practice of his profession the same year.

Mr. French has acquired a good practice, is an able lawyer and a valuable citizen. His wife was Mary V. Richards, daughter of William Richards. Mr. and Mrs. French have one daughter, Mamie.¹

II.

In 1911, French contributed a chapter on the “Bench and Bar” to *The History of Mower County, Minnesota*. In that chapter, he included the following brief self-portrait:

In the early fall of 1871 Lafayette French came to Austin, and at the September term of court of that year was admitted to the bar. January 1, 1872, he formed a partnership with W. Crandall in the practice of law. In 1878 the firm was dissolved, Mr. Crandall retiring, for the purpose of going into the insurance business. Mr. Crandall was a fair lawyer, but the turmoil and strife of an active life in the legal profession was distasteful to him. Mr. French has continued in the practice of his profession until the present time.²

¹ *History of Mower County, Minnesota* 79 (Mankato: Free Press Pub. House, 1884).

² Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, ed., *The History of Mower County, Minnesota* 83 (Chicago: H. C. Cooper Jr., & Co., 1911).

III.

French died on November 6, 1912, two weeks shy of his 64th year. The *Austin Weekly Herald* carried the story on its front page:

AUSTIN WEEKLY HERALD

WESNESDAY, NOV. 6, 1912

LAFAYETTE FRENCH DEAD

**Noted Lawyer Passed Away at
Noon Wednesday**

Lafayette French, the well known attorney of Southern Minnesota, and prominent citizen of this, city, died at his Chatham street residence at 12:30 Wednesday noon from the effect of a paralytic stroke which he suffered Monday evening.

The news of the death of Mr. French came as a shock to the whole City although the attending physicians had announced that there was no hope of his recovery. From ten minutes after the stroke Mr. French never regained consciousness and it was but a question of how soon he would pass away.

Lafayette French was born November 19, 1848, on a farm near Loraine township, Ohio. When he was but five years of age his father died and his mother died seven years later, leaving, the lad practically alone in the world. He went to work for an uncle on a farm for three years and this uncle sent the boy through Hiram college, Hiram, O., and gave him a year at Oberlin College. The young then started for himself and went to St. Louis where he taught in the public schools for two years, studying law evenings. He had an attack of typhoid fever and on recovering came to Minnesota, believing that his health

would be better here. He came directly to Austin and entered the employ of Page & Wheeler, a law firm with offices over the first National bank. That was in 1870. On September 28, 1871, he was admitted to practice, his certificate being signed by Judge M. N. Donaldson, as district judge. He wrote to Will Crandall, a young lawyer who was born on a farm adjoining that on which Mr. French was born in Loraine. These two boys had attended district school together and were together in Hiram and Oberlin colleges. Crandall came and he and Mr. French formed a copartnership which lasted until 1878 when Mr. Crandall gave up the law for the fire insurance business and later went to California where he died a couple years ago. On December 9, 1877, Mr. French married Mary Vine Richards, daughter of William Richards, who survives her husband. To them were born three children, Maurine French Varco of Fairview, Mont.; Lafayette French Jr. and Inez who is at home. Mr. French also leaves a sister, Mrs. Celia French Emmons of Wakeman, O.

After the firm of Crandall & French dissolved Mr. French continued in business until 1887 when he and A. W. Wright formed a partnership which continued until 1898. In 1904 Mr. French and E. B. Kelly became partners and this lasted until Mr. Kelly moved to Dakota. In 1909 Mr. French and F. G. Sasse became partners under the firm name of French & Sasse.

Mr. French had always enjoyed good health up to Dec. 14, 1908, when he suffered a stroke of paralysis while attending court at Albert Lea. On his partial recovery he and Mrs. French went to Florida. With but one exception he has spent each winter since that time in that state and was planning on going their this winter.

Mr. French was county attorney in 1871, and was mayor of our city in 1885, '86 and '87, and president of the Minnesota State Bar Association in 1909. He has practiced in United States district courts and appeared before the United States supreme

court in the famous Emmons depot case ten years ago.³ He was a Mason Knight Templar, a member of the B. P. O. E., A. O. U. W.; M. W. A. and Court of Honor.

He was a great lawyer before a jury and his reputation as a criminal lawyer was not confined to this state. He worked with all the intensity of an intense nature, on every case. He was a brilliant speaker and could be depended upon to carry almost any cause which he espoused.

The expressions of the Mower bar was sought by the Herald. F. G. Sasse, of the firm French & Sasse, was out of town on business. The others expressed themselves as follows on the death of Mr. French;

ONE OF ABLEST OF LAWYERS

From 1887 to the day of his death I knew Mr. French intimately, probably, than any other person not a member of his family. For fifteen years we were on opposite sides of nearly every litigated case tried in Mower county. Although we were antagonists constantly at the bar, it never interfered with our personal friendship which, from the first moment of our acquaintance, increased rather than diminished. I regarded him as one of the ablest trial lawyers I ever encountered when I was at the bar, and on the bench no lawyer who practiced before me had a clearer conception of the details of his case than Mr. French, nor was there one who could present his case to court or jury with greater clearness or more profound reasoning. His capacity to adapt himself to every varying condition of the trial of hard fought law suits was unrivaled. He always prepared his cases with great care. His judgment of a "good case" was almost unerring. In short, he was a thorough lawyer who made the most of his cases and was, therefore, eminently successful in his chosen profession. As a friend he was loyal and true,

³ MLHP: we are unable to find the cite to this case. Viewer assistance is requested.

sometimes too out-spoken, and sometimes too vigorous in his denunciation of what he did not approve; but beneath all the fervor of his character he was a friend of humanity and an especial champion of the weak against the strong. His death will be sincerely mourned not only by his family and immediate friends, but by many who have been recipients of his kindly favors.

NATHAN KINGSLEY.

HIS DEATH A PERSONAL LOSS

It is difficult indeed, in the short time I have, to express in words my full estimate or the life and work of Lafayette French.

He was approaching the summit of his career as a lawyer when I began the practice in this county, and through all the years he has been my close and steadfast friend. I believe that we knew each other thoroughly. From the first he appeared to take the most intimate interest in my efforts at the bar. When I was perplexed and doubtful, which, was often, he was never too hurried in his own pressing work, to stop to counsel, to advise, to search the books in my aid—not for a fee, but for the love of the work, and for the constant eager willingness to help me through hard places.

These things and many others which I wish had space to name give Lafayette French a lasting place in my memory.

His reputation as a lawyer is more than state wide. In the last thirty years he has doubtless tried more jury cases than any lawyer now living, in Minnesota, and he was more uniformly successful as an advocate than any other lawyer I have known. Well known and highly esteemed by the bench and bar of the state, his death will to all of us be a personal loss.

S. D. CATHERWOOD.

FROM FORMER PARTNER

It is with deep regret that I learn of the death of Hon. Lafayette French. I was associated with him in the practice of law and other matters for a period of more than ten years, commencing in 1887, and knew intimately of his qualifications and activities. As a lawyer he had no peer in Southern Minnesota if indeed in the state. He was a strong man before a jury, keen, logical, effective; his power of analysis of facts and law was profound, and had he had the physical strength he might have taken on work which would have made him a national figure as a lawyer, but always a rather sickly man he labored at a disadvantage. He participated either on one side or the other in nearly every important case tried in the courts in this county, and in many cases in courts in adjoining counties as well as in the federal courts, and was broadly known for his legal attainments.

He proved a friend in many cases to needy litigants, who, unable to pay him, obtained the same service and the same skill as those who did. As a citizen he was foremost in many of the best improvements of the city. He was Mayor when the City Water-works were constructed and devoted a large part of his time to that work to his own loss. He has always been prominent in public affairs, although never anxious to hold office, and his voice has been heard in many wise suggestions and counsel both to individuals and the governing bodies of the city and state. He is a man who will be missed from the activities of life and from the place he has made for himself in this city.

I sympathize deeply at this time with Mrs. French and his son and daughters to whom the loss is of course infinitely greater than to others.

A. W. WRIGHT.

HELPED YOUNG ATTORNEYS

As the youngest member of the Austin bar I wish to express my profound sorrow in the departure of so able, so kind, so considerate, attorney, friend, citizen. It has been my good fortune to have known Mr. Lafayette French ever since my early boyhood but it has been since my brother and I opened offices in this town that we were given the best opportunity for measuring and fathoming the true worth of such a character, not only with respect to his relation and helpful influence to the profession, but also in that wider scope of what such a life means to the city, county, state, nation, to his family in particularly, and the uplift of society.

People all over the state, both within and without the legal profession, recognize his eminent ability, but colossal as he was when measured thus, he excelled even more in his kind, considerate and unselfish traits of character. Often within the last five years have I heard him express some fatherly concern for the welfare of his children. This concern for his family seemed to occupy his thoughts and purposes yet withal he never lost interest in all the civic duties of life. I am sure that I am within bounds when I say that no young attorney, who ever had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Lafayette French ever left his office after having had some conversation with him but what felt the helpful and beneficial influence that his nature always imparted to those with whom he came in contact. Would that we had more such men whose virtues we might strive to emulate.

OTTO BAUDLER.

The body of the late Lafayette French lay in state in the court room Sunday Two uniform police and two Blue Lodge Masons stood guard while hundreds of our people passed by. The casket stood just below the judge's bench a place where Mr. French had often stood to argue the intricacies of the law. Beautiful flowers covered the casket, they covered the judge's

bench and filled completely the wall space back of the bench. There were floral pieces from the Minnesota State Bar Association, the Austin bar, the many fraternal orders of the city, from groups of men in various walks of life, from families and individuals. Seldom if ever, have so many floral emblems been seen at a funeral in this city.

At two o'clock, the hour of the funeral, the hall was crowded to its limit, many standing while others could not find entrance great was the attendance.

The supreme court of the state consisting of Hon. Calvin L. Brown, Hon. Phillip E. Brown, Hon. Geo. Bunn and Hon. Andrew Holt were present. Chief Justice Start was ill and was the only member not present. The following judges and attorneys were present: S. C. Partridge of Spring Valley, T. V. Knatvold of Albert Lea, John Moonan of Waseca, H. L. Smith of Mankato, Hon. Loren Craig of Mankato, Capt. W. H. Harris of St. Paul, J. D. Shearer of Minneapolis, H. C. Carlson of Albert Lea, H. H. Dunn of Albert Lea, John McCook of Cresco, E. P. Kelley of Carrington, N. D., H. A. Morgan of Albert Lea, J. F. D. Meighan, Albert Lea, N. E. Peterson of Albert Lea, R. J. Parker of Spring Valley and every member of the Mower county and Austin bar.

St. Bernard Commandery, Knights Templars of Albert Lea and Fidelity Lodge of Masons were present.

The music was by a quartette consisting of Mesdames Lewis and Pooler and Messrs. Tolles and Willbour.

Rev. W. L. Riley of the First Baptist church read the scripture and offered prayer and introduced Rev. F. E. Knopf of the Congregational church who delivered the addresses, one of the finest funeral discourses ever given in our city.

At the close of the services the Masonic orders stood with open ranks and at attention while the casket borne by Geo. A.

Hormel, Postmaster Simmons, Ex-Alderman Bump, G. Schleduder, William Todd and Sheriff Nicholzen was taken from the building.

The funeral possession was one of unusual length. When the head of the procession was at the Herald office on Lansing avenue the last carriages were just leaving the court house. The Knights Templar acted as escort for Fidelity Lodge A. F. and A. M.

The banks of floral tributes to the memory of the department all but concealed his last resting place in Oakwood cemetery, while the impressive Masonic service of the Blue Lodge was conducted by W. M. Fred L. Williams assisted by Attorney Jacob Nicholzen.

IV.

The following memorial was prepared by Samuel D. Catherwood for the Committee on Legal Biography of the State Bar Association:⁴

LAFAYETTE FRENCH.

Lafayette French, for more than forty years a resident of Austin, Minnesota, and during that time one of the leading and best known lawyers of the state, was born in Ohio on the 19th day of November, 1848. He died at his home in Austin on the 6th day of November, 1912. Although he did not possess a rugged constitution, Mr. French was a hard working, active and industrious man during his entire lifetime. As a lawyer he was widely known; his reputation as a successful advocate was well earned and well deserved. His nature was genial and kindly; he respected his friendships and remem-

⁴ *Proceedings of the Minnesota State Bar Association* 115-7 (St. Paul: Minnesota State Bar Assn., 1913).

bered his friends. Although closely devoted to his profession, he always took the keenest interest in public affairs.

It is, of course, as a lawyer, that he will be remembered by his local community and by the people of the state. Outside of the immediate circle of his own family, his closest friends were of the bench and bar, among whom he had many warm friendships. That feeling was aptly expressed recently by an eminent member of the Minnesota bar, who said: "I liked French because he was all lawyer."

I believe that those of us who knew him best saw in him certain salient characteristics, which made him eminent as a lawyer. These were his industry, earnestness, self-reliance, and sagacity.

His industry was untiring and ceaseless. Admitted to the bar in his early years and thrown upon his own resources in a young and growing town, he found himself pitted against the leading lawyers of Southern Minnesota as his opponents. Richard Jones, of Rochester; Henry Wells, of Preston; George N. Baxter and Gordon E. Cole, of Faribault; Amos Coggsell, of Owatonna; John A. Lovely, of Albert Lea, and James O'Brien, of Caledonia, were then all in full tide of professional activity, were often in the courts at Austin, and it was in forensic contest with those able men, that Lafayette French built up his reputation as an advocate. It was in that severe school, and through the long hours of hard work and the persistent energy with which he devoted himself to his profession, wherein he acquired the strength and skill and effectiveness which characterized his later years.

A more earnest man never presented a cause to a court or jury. He believed in his client, and in his clients cause. When he once entered upon the trial of a lawsuit he thought and dreamed and talked of nothing else; and his deadly earnestness in presenting evidence, in cross-examination, in the argument of a question of law to the court, or discussing the facts with the

jury, was ever most persuasive and convincing. In the midst of a close and heated contest of a jury trial one could not see his expressive face or his flashing eyes, or hear and feel the thrill of his resonant voice, without realizing the earnestness and sincerity which he was devoting to his client's interests.

From the very beginning of his career Mr. French learned to rely upon himself. His greatest work was done in causes which he prepared and tried alone. He possessed a memory that was a marvel, used no memoranda in the trial of a lawsuit, and seldom made notes of any facts or incidents during the course of a trial; but, whether in introducing his own evidence or in the cross examination of an opponent's witnesses, or in the summing up of his case when he had finished, there was seldom any ground that had not been covered. The fact as to whether his opponents were one or many seemed to concern him but little. He prepared his cases with such thoroughness that he knew what he had to present, and he relied upon his own ingenuity and instinct to develop by cross examination the weak points of his adversary's cause. In this feature of a trial he was always peculiarly strong.

In his sagacity and tact as an advocate Mr. French was much like B. F. Butler. In grasping the salient points of a case, in unmasking the weakness of an adversary, in veering round an unexpected obstacle or using it promptly to his advantage, or by quickly shifting ground, steer away from trouble by seizing upon a new theory of his case and pushing it to a successful conclusion, he had a genius which often brought his client a victory in the face of defeat.

During the past quarter century he doubtless tried a greater variety of jury cases than any lawyer now living in Minnesota, and he was more uniformly successful as an advocate, than any other lawyer I have known.

I would like to speak at length of his kindness to the student at law and to the young beginner in the profession, but space and

time forbid more than a brief reference. He was always interested in the work and in the efforts of his younger associates, and, although a busy man himself, he was never too hurried to counsel and to advise, and to discuss with the younger man the hard points of his first case. The help which he gave me in the lean and hard years of my early experience will always have a grateful place in my memory.

At the opening of the January term, 1913, of the District Court at Austin, which was the first term of court held after the death of Mr. French, a committee of the local bar was selected by the presiding Judge, Nathan Kingsley, to prepare and present appropriate resolutions, which were spread upon the minutes of the Court, presented to the family of the deceased, and published in the local papers. I can perhaps not more fittingly close this brief and inadequate sketch of Mr. French, than by quoting from the closing paragraph of those resolutions, reading as follows:

“We extend to the immediate family and to the other relatives our profound sympathy for the personal loss which they have sustained; reminding them that, although called home while still there was work to be done; yet, he had already done more and better work than most men do.”

Dated September, 1913.

Sincerely yours,
S. D. CATHERWOOD,
Austin, Minnesota.

B. Lafayette French, Jr.

Lafayette French's son and namesake followed him into the law. He attended Carlton, then transferred to the University of Minnesota, graduating in 1909. He read law at his father's firm, French & Sasse—or, as he later wrote, he “became a student of law under the able preceptorship of his honored father.” By this time, law schools were well established, and education by apprenticeship was on the wane. A quick learner, he was admitted to the bar in 1911. He remained with his father's firm after the latter's death late the following year.

There must have been a restlessness in French because in May 1917, at the age of 30, he enlisted in the army and took part in the battles of Somme, Meuse-Argonne, among others. Mustered out in 1919, he delivered a short address at the Methodist Church in Austin that was so moving it was recalled a quarter century later.⁵ He resumed practicing law and served as United States Attorney from 1923 through 1928. In 1934, he returned to Austin and formed a partnership with Rodney Dunnette. But he never acquired the outsized reputation that his father had—but, then, how could he?

I.

The following profile of Lafayette French, Jr., appeared in Henry A. Castle's *Minnesota: Its Story and Biography*, published in 1915. It has as much information about the senior Lafayette French as the son. It may be assumed that Lafayette French Jr. wrote it:

LAFAYETTE FRENCH. With residence and professional headquarters in his native City of Austin, Mr. French has gained secure status as one of the representative younger members of the bar of Mower County, where he has been engaged in active general practice since 1911, and where he is

⁵ *Austin Daily Herald*, August 21, 1944, at 7 (“Without manuscript, he spoke for half an hour to a crowd that that not only filled every seat in the big building, but many stood. As he pictured those crosses of the American dad in France one could see through his words what he described in such graphic and thrilling manner.”).

admirably upholding the prestige of the family name, his father having been one of the leading members of the bar of this county for many years prior to his death and having been one of the honored and influential citizens of Austin.

Lafayette French was born in Austin on the 10th of October, 1887, and is a son of Lafayette and Mary V. (Richards) French, the former of whom was born on a farm in Lorain County, Ohio, in November, 1912, and the latter of whom was born at British Hollow, Grant County, Wisconsin, in 1857. The father died at his home in Austin in 1912 and the mother still resides in this thriving little city, where her marriage was solemnized in 1877 and where her husband established his residence in 1871. Lafayette French, Sr., was reared and educated in the state of his birth, where he was graduated in Oberlin College, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In 1871, as a young man of about twenty four years, he came to Minnesota and settled at Austin, where he read law under the effective preceptorship of the well-known firm of Page & Wheeler and where he was admitted to the bar in 1872. He at once engaged in the practice of his profession at Austin, and he continued to be one of the honored members of the bar of the county until his death, forty years later. He not only achieved marked prominence and success as a skillful and high-minded lawyer, but also stood at all times exponent of the utmost civic loyalty and progressiveness, his fine character and distinctive ability having given him much influence in the community. That he achieved very high standing in his profession is vouchsafed by the fact that, in 1910 he held the office of president of the Minnesota State Bar Association. He served with ability as mayor of Austin and was most loyal to the state in which he won his way from obscurity to success in his profession and from the possession of the slightest of financial resources to the ownership of a large and valuable estate, including much real estate in Austin. He was one of the able advocates of the principles of the republican party and was active in numerous campaigns in Minnesota. In the Masonic fraternity he advanced to the reception of the chivalric degrees in the Austin Commandery

of Knights Templars, and he held membership also in the local lodge of the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks and the Knights of Pythias. He had no office-seeking proclivities, but in addition to giving in able administration as mayor of Austin he served for several years as county attorney. He was a member of the Baptist Church and his widow holds membership in the Congregational Church. Mr. French was a son of William and Mary (Boynton) French, who were natives of New Hampshire and who became early settlers in Ohio. The parents of Mrs. French were William and Mary (Eustis) Richards, both of whom were born in England and the marriage of whom was solemnized in the State of Wisconsin, whence they came to Minnesota and numbered themselves among the early settlers at Austin, the closing years of their lives having been passed in San Francisco, California. Lafayette and Mary V. (Richards) French became the parents of three children: Maurine is the wife of Lynn Varco, who is a merchant at Fairview, Montana; Lafayette, Jr., of this review, and Inez is the wife of Arnold Vane-Tempest, an electrical engineer residing in the City of San Francisco, California.

After duly profiting by the advantages afforded in the public schools of Austin Lafayette French, Jr., entered Carlton College, at Northfield, in which institution he was graduated as a member of the class of 1909. He thereafter was a student in the University of Minnesota, and after the completion of his collegiate work he became a student of law under the able preceptorship of his honored father. He thus continued his technical reading until he was enabled to prove himself eligible for and was admitted to the bar of his native state, in 1911. He at once became associated in practice with his father and Frank G. Sasse, and since the death of his father he has continued in earnest application to his profession as a member of the representative law firm of Sasse & French.

Mr. French is serving as secretary of the Austin Commercial Club, is unswerving in his allegiance to the republican party, and he is affiliated with the local Blue Lodge and Chapter of

the Masonic Fraternity as well as with the Theta Delta Chi College Fraternity. He holds membership in the Congregational Church and his wife holds the faith of the Christian Science Church.

In 1912 was solemnized the marriage of Mr. French to Miss Mabel Kaufman, of Omaha, Nebraska, and they are popular figures in the representative social activities of their home community.⁶

II.

Lafayette French Jr. died on August 19, 1944, as a result of an accident. He was 57 years old. On August 21, the *Austin Daily Herald* reported the event on its front page under the headline, "Lafayette French, Jr. Dies Following a Fall: Rites to Be Thursday." It described French as "a man with a mind that was so broad that he was at home in any group."⁷ A prominent lawyer in Austin, he "found success through study and work. He was a quick reader, had a marvelous retentive mind and could quote freely from classics or modern literature." Referring to French's service in World War I, the newspaper related the community's "memories" of him:

As one thinks of French, they see him as the boy, with determination to succeed. They see him as he stood in uniform of an American officer on the platform at the flag raising ceremony here in 1917, standing beside a comrade in a Canadian uniform. They see him as he went away to the war, see him as he took up his work again, see him fighting in our courts, throwing all his powers of eloquence and learning in the cause of his client. With keen mind he met the opposition. French was at his best when pitted against the most able of legal talent. It seemed to set loose the sparks of a brilliant mind, and honor and pathos, ridicule, sarcasm, and quotation, and superb acting, followed as his fertile mind played on all strings of feeling.⁸

⁶ Henry A. Castle, II *Minnesota: Its Story and Biography* 858 (Chicago: Lewis Pub. Co., 1915).

⁷ *Austin Daily Herald*, August 21, 1944, at 1.

⁸ *Id.* at 7

The next day, the *Daily Herald* carried the following editorial:

Lafayette French II

Not alone Austin and Mower county but the State of Minnesota has lost an influential and brilliant citizen in the passing of Lafayette French II. His death brings into bold relief his numerous attainments and emphasizes the insatiable capacity for friendship of this outstanding Austin attorney.

Lafayette French was to the manor born yet with all his attainments through the process of hard work and applied energy he was most democratic. He had held positions of great responsibility both in military and civil life still his human characteristics were a predominating trait and he never lost the common touch. He numbered his friends by the scores and by the hundreds from all stations of civil and official life wherever he went.

An omnivorous reader, Mr. French was at home with friends of all ranks in the drawing room. The classics were almost commonplace to him. He read rapidly and his authors ran from Chaucer and Dickens to Shakespeare and Burns; from Somerset Maugham to Robert Louis Stevenson and Walt Whitman. He kept abreast of the times and literally lived every day on the battlefields as he followed the activities of his son and recalled his own experiences of World War I when he rose by his own efforts from a private to a captain. His patriotism was exemplary and those who heard his Memorial Day address "Did the Doughboy Love the Flag?" know how profound and sincere his love of country was. His address was a masterpiece and breathed the fire of an inspired patriot.

But in death as in life the influence of noble men continues to be felt and Lafayette French II has left an indelible impression

of constructive achievements upon altogether too indolent a world.⁹

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Posted MLHP: February 27, 2010.

⁹ *Austin Daily Herald*, August 22, 1944, at 4.