

In Memoriam

Judge Orris E. Lee

November 10, 1854 – January 31, 1933

**Washington County Bar Association
District Court
Nineteenth Judicial District
Stillwater, Minnesota**

1933

ORRIS E. LEE

1854-1933

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**WHEREAS** after more than fifty-three years of practice as a lawyer in the City of Stillwater, Judge Orris E. Lee has, on January 31, 1933, answered the call of death.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the following facts and characteristics pertaining to him be publicly emphasized by being brought openly before this Court on this occasion and made a permanent record in the files of the Washington County Bar Association.

With one exception, Judge Lee was the oldest living member the Washington County Bar Association. He was one of the pioneers of the City of Stillwater and was duly admitted to practice in his profession on Nov. 15th, 1879. He was elected to the office of County Attorney in 1888. Later he served as County Commissioner and for many years prior to his death was Judge of the Municipal Court of Stillwater. He was instrumental in securing for Stillwater a Conciliation Court and since its establishment took a great interest in the conduct of that Court.

He was one of the original members of Company K of Stillwater and since he joined the organization on April 5, 1883 he was closely connected with the military service of the state. He was an inspector of small arms practice in the Minnesota National Guard for many years holding the rank of Major, and he saw active service on the Mexican border.

He had a keen interest in the history of Stillwater and its vicinity and during the latter part of his life was regarded as one of the authentic sources of information hereabouts regarding all matters connected with the early life of the city. His keen interest

in the youth of the vicinity was manifested in the devotion which he showed toward the Boy Scout movement to which he gave a great deal of his personal time and effort.

He was a man of outstanding character in his community and at all times stood for the best and highest in the American citizenship. His personal habits were above reproach. His faithfulness to the duties of his office were admired by everyone. He was a fair and impartial judge and sincere in his convictions.

In his death the city, county and state have lost a faithful public servant, whose conscientious reverence for the obligations of his office was the admiration of everyone.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the family of Judge Orris E. Lee.

**WASHINGTON COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION**

**By Resolutions Committee.**

James E. MacFarlane  
P. O. Lindblom  
Roger W. Worth

## APPENDIX

From Rev. Edward D. Neill, *History of Washington County and the St. Croix Valley* 582 (1881):

Orris E. Lee was born in Randolph, New York. His parents removed to Allegany, New York, thence to Cannelton, Indiana, where they remained until 1864. They then removed to Corry, Pennsylvania. where Orris finished his education in the high schools, in 1875. He came immediately in this city and entered the law-office of McCluer and Marsh, read law, and was admitted in 1879. His office is on the corner of Main and Chestnut streets.

From J. A. A. Burnquist, *3 Minnesota and Its People* 339-340 (1924):

### JUDGE ORRIS E. LEE.

Judge Orris E. Lee is presiding over the municipal court at Stillwater and for forty-four years has been a member of the Washington county bar. The greater portion of this period has been devoted to public service along the line of his profession and his pronounced ability in the interpretation of the law and the firmness, frankness and integrity of his character are widely acknowledged.

He was born on a farm in Cattaraugus county, New York, November 10, 1854, and his father, William Henry Lee, was also a native of that county, his natal day being December 23, 1828. He was a son of Lyman Lee, who was born at Guilford, Connecticut, September 8, 1799, and was a New England farmer. His father, Timothy Lee, was also a native of that city and a farmer by occupation. He was born November 1,

1775, a son of William Lee, who likewise became an agriculturist. He saw service in the Revolutionary war, joining Captain Painter's Company. William Lee was born at Guilford, Connecticut, in 1741, a son of Edward Lee, whose father, Thomas Lee, was a native of England. In 1641, during his boyhood, he was brought to America by his father, Thomas Lee, who became a victim of smallpox and died on the sailing vessel while en route to this country. The ancestral home of the family in England was at Dichley.

William Henry Lee, the father of the Judge, learned the cabinet maker's trade, which he followed during his earlier years, and in later life he engaged in railroad work. On December 23, 1852, he married Sarah Cyrene Marsh, who was born in Cattaraugus county, New York, July 29, 1832, a daughter of Perly Marsh, whose birth occurred in Dover, Vermont, December 22, 1797. Mr. Lee passed away on January 14, 1901, having long survived his wife, whose death had occurred on March 28, 1872. They had a family of five children, two of whom are living: Orris E.; and Fred Henry, who is a resident of Syracuse, New York.

When Judge Lee was six years old his parents settled at Cannelton, Indiana, and soon afterward the father enlisted for service in the Civil war, joining the Fifth Indiana Regiment. After he went to the front the mother and children returned to Cattaraugus county, New York, and in 1866 the family moved to Corry, Pennsylvania. There Judge Lee attended the public schools and afterward went to Olean, New York, where he lived until 1878.

When a young man of twenty-four he came to Stillwater and began reading law in the offices of McCluer & Marsh, the junior partner being his maternal uncle. Having mastered the principles of

**jurisprudence, he was admitted to the bar in 1879 and soon afterward was elected to the office of municipal judge, serving for a term of four years. Following this he was called to the position of county attorney, which he filled for a similar period, proving an able and vigorous prosecutor but never seeking convictions merely to enhance his reputation. He was next chosen court commissioner of Washington county and so ably did he discharge his duties that he was retained in the office for twenty years. In 1916 he was appointed municipal court judge and has since been elected to the position without opposition. In that time many cases have been brought before him, involving all of the ills that the life of a city presents, and his equitable and efficient administration of the law has won for him the respect and commendation of the entire community.**

**He has had broad experience in the courts and his knowledge of the law is comprehensive and exact. He has a thorough contempt for shams and on no question has he ever lacked the courage to stand alone, if need be, in the maintenance of the principles of right and justice.**

**On October 19, 1885, Judge Lee married Miss Katherine May Wilson, a sister of Judge Frank T. Wilson of Stillwater, and they traveled life's journey together until October 9, 1917, when Mrs. Lee passed away. She had become the mother of four daughters: Ruth, now the wife of Marinus Markusen of Cromwell, Minnesota, by whom she has two children, David Lee and Sidney Lee; Marjorie W., who is connected with business interests in Minneapolis; Dorothy D., who is at home; and Barbara S., who is a graduate nurse and follows her profession in this city. The children were**

**accorded liberal educational privileges and all are graduates of the University of Minnesota.**

**Judge Lee is a member of the Washington County and Minnesota State Bar Societies and American Bar Association. Like all virile man of the west, he is fond of the outdoor life, and his political support is given to the republican party. He is sincere, upright, industrious, fearless and honest. Blessed with a human warmth born of contact with the people, he also possesses the poise and legal learning that make him a natural arbiter of human differences – a judge in all that the word implies.**

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**Posted MLHP: July 15, 2020**