

FRANK W. LYON

(November 16, 1856 – January 31, 1921)

Frank Lyon began practicing law in Little Falls, the seat of Morrison County, in 1887. He was county attorney for three terms, city attorney for two years, and a member of the board of education for fifteen years. In 1915, he was elected the first judge of the city Municipal Court. That court was established by the 39th Legislature in February 1915.¹ He still held that post when he died on January 31, 1921, at age sixty-four. The following day, the Little Falls *Transcript* carried his obituary on its front page:

F. W. LYON IS
DEAD; ILL FOR
PAST YEAR

ATTORNEY, PROMINENT IN PUB-
LIC LIFE, PASSED AWAY
LAST NIGHT

¹ 1915 Laws, c. 10, at 14-15, approved February 20, 1915, provided:

CHAPTER 10.

An act to establish a municipal court in the city of Little Falls, County of Morrison, State of Minnesota.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota:

Section 1. Municipal court established at Little Falls.—A court of record to be known as "The Municipal Court of Little Falls" is hereby established in and for the City of Little Falls, County of Morrison, State of Minnesota.

Sec. 2. Powers of court.—Said court shall possess all the powers and be subject to all of the provisions set forth in that portion of Chapter five (5), General Statutes of Minnesota for 1913, relating to municipal courts, and acts amendatory and supplementary thereto.

Sec. 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

MASONIC LODGE TO BE IN
CHARGE OF FUNERAL AT
CHURCH

Attorney F. W. Lyon passed away last night at 11 o'clock. Ailing for a year, and confined to his bed since August 26 of last year, Mr. Lyon suffered intensely but uncomplainingly so that friends who visited him at his bedside were led to remark at the unflinching manner in which he accepted his pain

Church bells were tolled and flags over public buildings placed at half mast in honor of the deceased who during his entire life here was one of the most active citizens in public affairs

...

Mr. Lyon was municipal judge and has been the only incumbent in that office since its inauguration here several years ago.

Deceased was a member of the Board of Education of the Little Falls school district for 15 years. He served three terms as county attorney and had always been an active member among fraternal organizations.

F. W. Lyon was born November 18, 1856, at West Jersey, Ill. Nine years later, with his parents he moved to Toulon, Ill., where he resided until 16 years old. He taught school for two terms, and when 18 years old entered Knox College at Galesburg, Ill. He graduated from the college in 1878 and entered the office of Judge Puterbaugh, at Peoria, Ill., where he read law for three years. He was admitted to the bar in 1881 and practiced in his home town of Toulon.

In 1883 Mr. Lyon and Miss Helen Thompson, of Pekin, Ill., were united in marriage. They resided at Toulon for two years when they moved to Minneapolis. Two years later they made Little Falls their home and since that time have resided here.

The union was blessed by the birth of five children. The first born, a boy, died in infancy. In 1905, Isabel, 13 years old, died.

Deceased is survived by his widow, and three daughters, Mrs. W. W. Bane of Brainerd; Mrs. C. C. Wright of Minneapolis and Miss Gertrude Lyon, who has been at home for several weeks.

Two brothers, Dr. (Morton Lyon, of DeWitt, Ia., and Clyde Lyon of Perry, Ia., also survive and will be present for the funeral.

He was a member of the Masonic order of which he was a past master and the last meeting of past masters recently held was the first gathering of the kind ever missed by him, it was pointed out at the session. He was a member of the Elks lodge, the Maccabees, Red Men and for years had been president of the Firemen's Relief association.²

Several days later, the weekly Little Falls *Herald* also reported the Judge's passing on its front page:

DEATH CALLS
FRANK W. LYON
PROMINENT LOCAL ATTORNEY
DEAD AFTER LONG
ILLNESS

Death last Monday claimed Frank W. Lyon, one of the best known citizens of Little Falls. The end came at 11 p.m., Monday, following an illness extending over a period of nearly twelve months from neuritis. He had been confined to bed continually since last November.

My. Lyon was 64 years old. He was born in West Jersey, Ill., Nov. 18, 1856, the son of C. M. S. and Sophronia E.

² *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, Tuesday, February 1, 1921, at 1 (photo and funeral arrangements omitted).

Lyon. He attended common schools near his home in Start county, Illinois. The family moved to Toulon, Ill., in 1865, and when Frank Lyon reached the age of sixteen years, he started teaching in the rural schools. Anxious to gain a better education, he saved up enough money to enable him to go to college, and after two years of teaching, he entered Knox college at Galesburg, Ill., where he completed a four-year academic course, in the meantime reading law in the office of J. H. Miller at Toulon, Ill. After completing his college course, he read law in the office of Judge Puterburgh of Peoria and in June, 1882 was admitted to practice at the bar by examination before the supreme court. He started practicing law in his home town, Toulon, and during that time was the postmaster there for two years.

In March 1883, he was married to Miss Helen Thompson of Pekin, Ill., this marking the culmination of a college romance which began at Knox college. In 1885, the family moved to Minneapolis, this state, where they lived for four years. Mr. Lyon: came to Little Falls in 1887 and started the practice of law here, his family joining him the following year. Since that time, the family has lived here continually.

Mr. Lyon, better known to his many friends as Judge Lyon, was one of the leading attorneys of the county and one of the oldest members of the bar in the city. A year after coming to Little Falls, he was appointed county attorney to succeed Mr. Rhodes and he held that office intermittently for three terms. He was city attorney of Little Falls in 1890-91 and for fifteen years up to 1910, he was a member of the board of education here. In the spring of 1915, he was elected municipal judge, this office having then just been created here. This office he has held ever since. He was a member of the Little Falls fire department and had been president of the Little Falls Fire Relief Association for many years.

Few men here had as wide an acquaintance in the city and county as Mr. Lyon and he had a host of friends who mourn his demise. He was a member of the Maccabees, the Redmen, of which he was once great sachem; the Elks; and the Masons, of which he was past master. He was also a member of the Fire Relief Association. . . .³

At its annual convention later that year, a committee of the Minnesota State Bar Association presented the following memorial to him:

Frank W. Lyon, late of Little Falls, Minnesota, was a native of Illinois. He attended Knox College at Galesburg and was admitted to the practice of law in the year 1882 at Peoria, Illinois. He came to Little Falls in 1887 and was engaged in the practice of his profession from that time, without interruption, until his death.

Judge Lyon rendered important and valuable public services covering a long period of time, as a member of the Board of Education of the city of Little Falls, County Attorney of Morrison County, and Judge of the Municipal Court of Little Falls. He was faithful, persevering and resourceful in his services to his clients, and at the same time generous and most courteous to the opposing counsel. Of pleasing and attractive personality, he was, especially in jury trials, an opponent demanding careful attention. He was not only an able lawyer but a lofty patriot, a cultured scholar and a charming and agreeable companion.

He died at his home in the city of Little Falls January 31, 1921.⁴ ■

³ *Little Falls Herald*, Friday, February 4, 1921, at 1 (photo and funeral arrangements omitted).

⁴ *Proceedings*, Minnesota State Bar Association 228 (1921).