

MEMORIAL

JOHN T. O'DONNELL

(July 30, 1882 - March 4, 1953)

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Hennepin County Bar Association
Hennepin County District Court
Minneapolis, Minnesota
April 18, 1953

JOHN T. O'DONNELL

March 4, 1953 marked the passing of John T. O'Donnell, a member of the Minnesota State and Hennepin County Bar Associations, who had served the Minneapolis City Attorney's office for 36 years.

Mr. O'Donnell was a lifetime resident of the City of Minneapolis and was graduated from the University of Minnesota School of Law in 1905.

In the year 1911 he became associated with the office of the Minneapolis City Attorney as assistant, in 1933 he became first assistant Minneapolis City Attorney and at the time of his retirement in 1947 he was Minneapolis City Attorney. After his retirement he engaged in the private practice of law at 534 Baker building until shortly before his death.

Resolutions passed by the City Council and by the Aldermen of the City of Minneapolis attest appreciation of the long and efficient service rendered to the City by Mr. O'Donnell and his outstanding ability, integrity and devotion to duty.

During the many years he had charge of workmen's compensation cases and damage claims against the City, Mr. O'Donnell exhibited great skill as a trial lawyer and saved the City many thousands of dollars. He was conversant with the principles of negligence as they relate to the field of municipal law and in his capacity as counsel for the City he was successful in several cases which have been landmarks in municipal law. His dignified appearance and resonant voice made him an ideal advocate.

Mr. O'Donnell is survived by his wife, Louise O'Donnell, his daughter, Lorraine M. O'Donnell, two sisters, Alice K. O'Donnell and Mrs. M. W. Cronin, and a brother, Dr. James E. O'Donnell. To them the Bar Memorial Committee, on behalf of the Minnesota State and Hennepin County Bar Associations, extends its expression of sincere sympathy in their loss and hopes that they may find consolation and comfort in the memory of John T. O'Donnell's good and useful life. He will be greatly missed by

the legal fraternity generally and particularly by lawyers, judges and court house employees with whom he was so closely associated for so many years.

Respectfully submitted,
April 18-1953 *W. W. Gibson*
W. W. Gibson

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APPENDIX

On October 8, 1948, the Minneapolis City Council passed the following resolution of appreciation of O'Donnell's years of service:

RESOLUTION

(By Aldermen Murphy and Kauth)

Expressing the appreciation of the City Council to John T. O'Donnell for efficient, able, and outstanding public service rendered by him to the City of Minneapolis.

The inexorable march of time has deprived the City of the services of John T. O'Donnell, a valuable and efficient public officer who has reached the age when it is necessary for him to retire from the City service after thirty-six years of able and distinguished work as City prosecutor, first assistant City Attorney, and City Attorney.

All of the present members of the City council know Mr. O'Donnell. They, together with former Aldermen and other public officials, can testify to his outstanding ability, integrity, and singular devotion to duty.

For many years he had charge of the workmen's compensation cases and damage claims against the City, and by his painstaking investigation and consummate skill as a trial lawyer he saved the city many thousands of dollars.

He successfully represented the city in two cases in the supreme court of this state which enunciated important principles of municipal law — Szroka v. Northwestern Bell Telephone Co., and others, 171 Minn. 57, 213 N. W. 557, and J. Clayton Roche and Another v. City of Minneapolis, 223 Minn. 359, 27 N. W. (2d) 295.

In the first case it was decided that the legislature cannot by law applicable only to cities of the first class extend the thirty-day limitation within which notice of claims against the City, must be filed, and make such extension retroactive to apply to claims where timely notice has not been given.

In the second case the court held that when a municipality had engaged competent engineers to plan and construct the system of streets and sewers it is not liable for errors of judgment which may have been made by such engineers, and which resulted in surface water being discharged on private property within the City. This decision enabled the City to avoid the payment of large amounts in damages to property owners who claim that its carelessness resulted in the unnecessary casting of surface waters upon their property.

Mr. O'Donnell served the City well, and as the representatives of the people we express our appreciation of his years of public service.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the City Council of the City of Minneapolis does hereby acknowledge a debt of gratitude to John T. O'Donnell for his efficient and outstanding service to the City performed during his thirty-six

years in the Legal Department. We extend our sincere and best wishes to him for continued success in the practice of law, and happiness for years to come,

Passed October 8, 1948. Eric G. Hoyer, President of the Council.

Approved October 8, 1948. Eric G. Hoyer, Acting Mayor.

Attest: Chas. C. Swanson, City Clerk. •

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The MLHP is indebted to Colleen S. Peltier, City Clerk's Department, for providing a copy of the foregoing resolution.

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Posted MLHP: August 12, 2015.