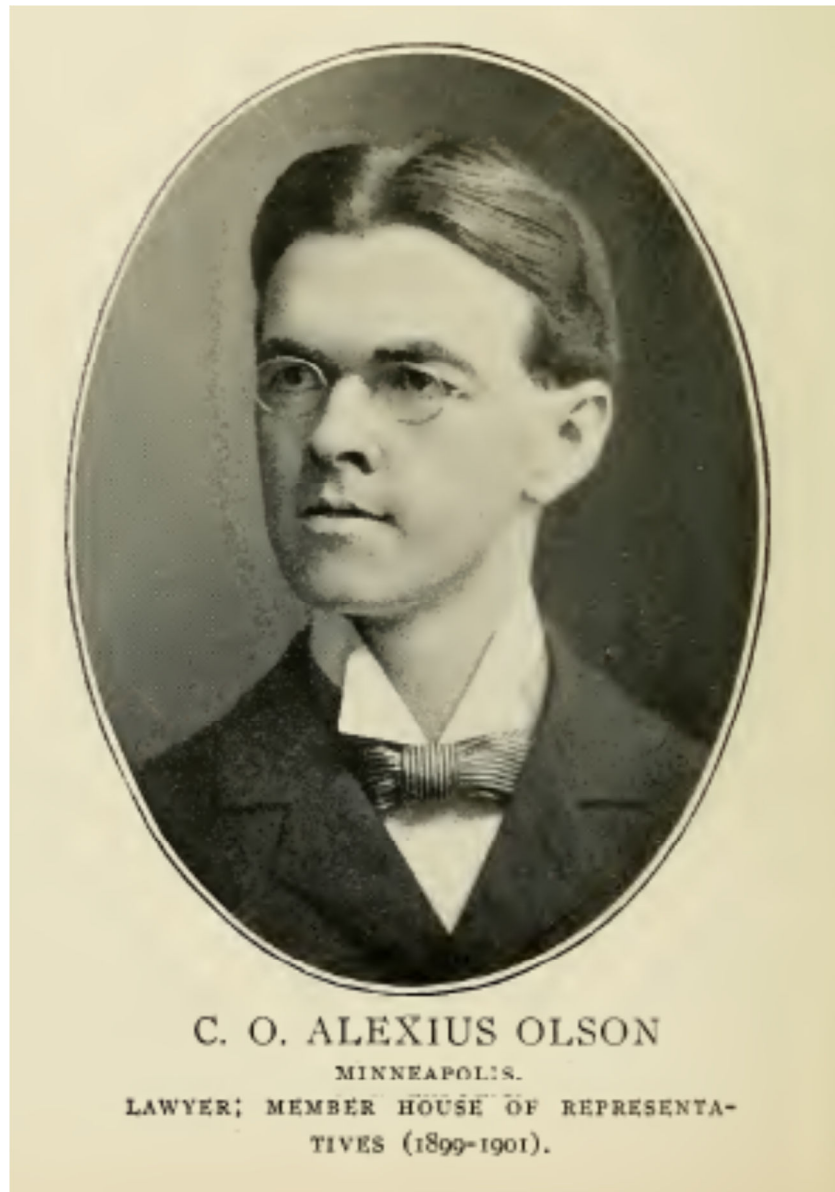


Carl Oscar Alexius Olson

(April 5, 1872 – April 6, 1929)



(1902)

In 1874, Maja Stina Persdotter Olsson, a widow, left Sweden for America, with two year old Carl Oscar Alexius Olsson in tow. After a brief stay on a farm in Waconia, Minnesota, they moved to Minneapolis. Alexius Olson, as he preferred to be known, graduated from North High School in 1891. The next year he travelled through Europe, including Sweden, perhaps trying to see why his mother emigrated and what was left behind. Returning to Minneapolis, he enrolled in the University of Minnesota, where he spent the next five years. He thrived, as class president, editor of a student paper, organizer of a fraternity and honored by the faculty. Upon graduation with a B.S. in 1895, he entered the Law Department and was awarded an LL.B. in 1896, followed by an LL.M in 1897. We can imagine his mother’s pride in her only son’s receipt of three University degrees in three years.¹

Admitted to the bar on June 5, 1896,² he became an associate of Joseph L. Dobbin and specialized in real estate and probate cases. The next year, at age twenty-six, he entered politics, running on the Republican ticket to represent the Forty-fourth district of the state House of Representatives. It was a “top two” election, the results of which were:

C. O. A. Olson (Rep).....	2,082
Mathew F. Taylor.....	1,898
Wm. J. Von der Wayer (Dem-Pop)	1,960
Anthony T. Grotte.....	1,712 ³

¹ *The General Catalogue of the University of Minnesota Alumni of the College of Science, Literature and Arts*, published in 1916, has this entry for the class of 1895:

C. O. Alexius Olson, B S., 95; LL. B., 96; LL. M., 97; Zeta Psi; Delta Chi (Law); Class Pres. Sophomore; Ed. *The Ariel*; Cadet Major U. of M. Cadet Corps. Attorney, David P. Jones & Co., Investment Bankers and Real Estate Brokers; mem. House of Representatives, Minn. State Legislature, 99-01; mem. Minneapolis Charter Comm., 03-07. 236 McKnight Bldg. and 324, 33d Ave. N., Mpls., Minn.

Id. at 45.

² *1 Roll of Attorneys: Supreme Court, State of Minnesota, 1858-1970* 40 (State Law Library, 2011).

³ 1899 Blue Book, at 514. His biographical sketch in the legislative manual provides:

C. O. ALEXIUS OLSON (Republican) was born in Long Parish, West Gothland, Sweden, April 5, 1872. He came to America and settled in Minnesota in 1874; was educated in the public schools of Minneapolis and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1895, and from the law department of said institution the following year; admitted to the bar by the Minnesota supreme court in June, 1896, and has since been engaged in the active practice of law in Minneapolis. Mr. Olson is not married and resides at 324 Thirty-third avenue North, Minneapolis.

Id at 627.

He was assigned to the Judiciary, Logs and Lumber, Public Lands, Public Parks and Ways and Means committees. He did not run for reelection in 1900, but remained active in public affairs by serving on the city Charter Commission from 1903 to 1907. Years later he donated political correspondence of this period to the Historical Society.⁴

In 1901, he subscribed to *History of the Great Northwest and Its Men of Progress*, and in consideration had his self-sketch included in it. A self-portrait of a lawyer-subscriber such as this is important because it is as close to his autobiography as we will ever get. Like many immigrants, he begins in Sweden:

OLSON, Carl Oscar Alexius, is one of the rising young men of the Hennepin county bar, Minnesota. He is a native of Sweden, and was born April 5, 1872, at Kaasantorp, in Long parish, Skaraborgs laen, the old lionie of his paternal ancestors. His father, Anders Olsson, was a farmer in moderate circumstances. He died June 13, 1872, from the result of sickness contracted while serving in the Swedish army. Maja Stina Persdotter, the mother of the subject of this sketch, was born January 23, 1850, on her father's homestead, where is now located the business portion of the prosperous village of Wara. She was married to Mr. Olsson in 1869. In the spring of 1874 she emigrated to America, locating at Waconia, Minn., where she was married the following year to John Swenson, from Skarstad, Vestergotland, Sweden. Alexius came with his mother to this country and lived for a short time on a farm near Waconia, then moved to Minneapolis, where he has remained ever since, with the exception of a couple of years spent on a farm at Swede Lake, near Watertown, Minn. He attended first the country school at Swede Lake, then the Franklin, Sumner and North Side High schools of Minneapolis, graduating in 1891, as class president in the pioneer class of the latter institution, receiving at commencement the German-American Bank prize for oratory. He employed his out-of-school hours as a carrier on the daily papers, and also clerked in various stores and offices. In 1892 he went to Europe and traveled through Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and England. He returned to America the following year, and during the summer was employed at the World's Fair in Chicago.

⁴ 6 *Minnesota History* 205 (June 1925)("Some twenty letters relating to the "Swedish-American Republican State Club," mainly for the year 1902, have been added by Mr. C. O. Alexius Olson of Minneapolis to the papers of the Swedish Historical Society of America, which are in the custody of the Minnesota Historical Society.").

Coming back to Minneapolis in the fall he entered the University of Minnesota, taking the scientific course in the academic department, and graduated with the degree of B. S. in 1895. He then entered the law department and graduated with the degree of LL. B. the following year. In 1897 he received the degree of LL. M. from the same institution. While at the university he was actively interested in student affairs and served successively as class president, editor of The Ariel, the leading college paper, and as cadet major of the University Battalion. At commencement he was recommended by the faculty to the adjutant general's office as available for military duty in case the government should wish to organize troops. He was also one of the originators and charter members of a local Greek letter society, which secured the establishment at the university of a chapter of the Zeta Psi fraternity, and is a member of the Delta Chi law fraternity.

He was admitted to the bar by the Minnesota supreme court, June 5, 1896, and has since that time been engaged in the general practice of law at Minneapolis, with offices in the Temple Court. During the first year of his practice he was associated with the firm of Dobbin & Bond, since which time he has maintained an office of his own.

In politics he has always been an ardent Republican, and as a member of ward and city campaign committees has actively participated in the elections, and has devoted considerable time to the promotion of political organization in Hennepin county. In 1898 he was elected a member of the house of representatives of the Minnesota state legislature, and in 1900 was prominently mentioned as a candidate for the office of secretary of state.

As secretary of the John Ericsson Memorial Association he has been enthusiastic in the cause of raising funds for the erection of a monument in memory of the great inventor of the Monitor. From 1892 to 1898 he served as president of the North Side High School Alumni Association. He is actively interested in sports and is a member of the Minnetonka Ice Yacht Club, the Odin Club, and the Bryn Mawr Golf Club. His religious connections are with the Lutheran body. He is a member of Augustana church and has been prominently identified

with the young people's society of that denomination, having served as president of the Bethlehem and Augustana societies, respectively.⁵

He was associated with Joseph L. Dobbin, probably in an office sharing arrangement, until the latter's death on July 31, 1904.⁶ He continued as a sole practitioner for five more years before going "in-house" at the David P. Jones Company, an investment banker and real estate broker. In 1923 he resumed private practice.⁷ He died on Saturday, April 6, 1929, aged fifty-seven. The following Monday, the *Minneapolis Journal* carried his obituary:

C. O. A. OLSON,
ATTORNEY, DIES

Resident of Minneapolis Since
1880 Had Served As
Legislator

C. O. Alexius Olson, 57 years old, a resident of Minneapolis since 1880 and former legislator and charter commission member, died Saturday night.

⁵ Hugh J. McGrath & William Stoddard, *History of the Great Northwest and Its Men of Progress* 212-213 (1901). The photograph on the front page of this article appears in this book as well as in *Men of Minnesota* 150 (1902).

In 1907 the following biographical data appeared in *Little Sketches of Big Folks in Minnesota* :

OLSON C O Alexius, Minneapolis. Res 324 33d av N, office Temple Court. Lawyer. Born April 5, 1872 in Long Parish, Skaraborg county Sweden, son of Andrew and Maria S (Pherson) Olson. Educated in public schools of Watertown and Minneapolis: graduated North High School 1891; academic dept U of M, B S 1895; LL B 1896; LL M 1897. Employed at World's Columbian Exposition 1893; began practice of law with J L Dobbin 1896-1904; now practicing alone. Representative state legislature 1899-1901; member Minneapolis Charter Comn 1903 to date. Member of the Zeta Psi college fraternity and Delta Chi law fraternity; Odin Club and North Minneapolis Commercial Club.

⁶ In the 1898 *Minneapolis City Directory*, his office is located at Suite 540 Temple Court, while Dobbin occupied Suite 260; three years later, they share Suite 560, Temple Square. See 1901 *Minneapolis City Directory*, at 1537-1538. The City Directories in these years never listed "Dobbin & Olson." Dobbin's death was reported in the *Minneapolis Journal*, August 1, 1904, at 3 ("Death Calls J. Dobbin").

⁷ Lawyer Wallace H. Davis was employed at the David P. Jones Company from 1900 to his death on December 7, 1920, a period overlapping Olson's. See "Wallace H. Davis (1850-1920)" (MLHP, 2015). Olson was one of the active pallbearers at Davis's funeral. *Minneapolis Journal*, December 7, 1920, at 28.

Mr. Olson was born in Sweden, April 5, 1872, and came to Waconia, Minn. with his mother when he was two years old. Six years later, they moved to Minneapolis, where Alexius attended Sumner, Franklin and North high school. In his senior year at high school he won the German-American Bank prize. He entered the law school at the University of Minnesota in 1891 (sic), and was graduated in 1895 as Bachelor of Law (sic) and in 1897 with the degree of master of arts (sic). He was president of his class.

He started a real estate law and probate law practice in Minneapolis after graduating from the university and became affiliated with the David P. Jones Company in 1909 as their attorney.

He served in the state legislature from 1899 to 1901 and was a member of the charter commission from 1903 to 1907. He retired from the Jones company in 1923 and started a law practice of his own....⁸

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Posted MLHP: August 19, 2015.

⁸ *Minneapolis Journal*, Monday, April 8, 1929, at 27 (details of funeral services omitted). Obituaries were also published in the *Minneapolis Star*, Tuesday, April 9, 1929, at 15; and the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, April 9, 1929, at 12.