

In Memoriam

August V. Rieke

(August 15, 1865 – January 16, 1944)

Hennepin County Bar Association
District Court
Fourth Judicial District
Minneapolis, Minnesota

March 21, 1944

In 1859, four years after Renville County was formed by act of the legislature,¹ the Rieke family settled in what became known as Cairo Township. August Victor Rieke was born on his father's farm on August 15, 1865, and lived and toiled there for the next twenty-two years. In 1893 after working in several agricultural businesses, he began reading law in the office of a lawyer in Fairfax. He married in 1895 and began a family. He was in a hurry.

On February 14, 1898, he was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court.² That autumn he ran for Renville County Attorney on the Republican ticket. He was endorsed by the *Renville Star-Tribune*:

“A. V.” as he is more generally known was born in Renville county 33 years ago, his father being George Rieke, one of the defenders of Fort Ridgely at the time of the siege, and has been a resident of the county nearly all the time since. He has been engaged for five years past in the practice of law with an office at Fairfax. His uniform success has resulted in a rapidly expanding business and its popularity with the people of all sections was fittingly recognized in the nomination for county attorney tendered him by the Republicans in convention at Olivia. The ability shown by him in his law practice is a guarantee that with his election the affairs of the office of county attorney will be placed in good hands.³

Candidates did not usually run individual advertisements at this time; instead they were listed in the party's ticket published in local news-

¹ 1855 Laws, c. 6, §15, at 26 (approved February 20, 1855).

² Roll of Attorneys, Supreme Court, State of Minnesota, 1858-1970, at 47 (Minnesota Digital Library).

³ *Renville Star-Tribune*, October 28, 1898, at 7 (photograph omitted).

papers and relied on the party to push or pull them to victory. From the weekly Renville *Star Farmer*:⁴

Rieke's opposition was the incumbent Richard T. Daly, a prominent Democrat practicing in Olivia, who was appointed county attorney to replace Samuel R. Miller, who had resigned to lead a company of volunteers in the Spanish-American War.⁵ The results of the election on November 8, 1898 were:⁶

August V. Rieke (Republican).....1,917
Richard T. Daly (inc. & Democrat)....1,638

⁴ *Renville Star Farmer*, September 23, 1898, at 4. Party tickets were published in different format in party newspapers. E.g., *Fairfax Crescent*, October 7, 1898, at 1.

⁵ For biographical sketches of Richard T. Daly and Samuel R. Miller, see James McBride George, "Bench and Bar of Renville County" in Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, editor, 2 *The History of Renville County, Minnesota* 1248, 1250-51 (1916). George's chapter on the county's bench and bar is posted in the "County Bench and Bar" Category in the Archives of the MLHP.

⁶ *Renville Star Farmer*, November 11, 1898, at 6.

In 1900, a Republican year, he was re-elected. The results of the election on November 6, 1900, were:

August V. Rieke (Republican).....2,506
John M. Freeman (Democrat).....1,903 ⁷

In 1902, he ran for the state senate and was elected. The Twenty-second district covered Renville County. The results of the election on November 4, 1902, were:

August V. Rieke (Republican).....2,085
Eric L. Winje (Democrat).....1,645 ⁸

He served one term. He continued to practice law in Fairfax, and published his business card in the local paper: ⁹

⁷ *Renville Star Farmer*, November 9, 1900, at 8. John McDonough Freeman was a lawyer practicing in Olivia. See James McBride George, note 5, at 1251.

⁸ 1903 Blue Book, at 522. Winje was an attorney in Renville County. The following biographical sketch appeared in the Legislative Manual that year:

A. V. RIEKE: (Republican) is a lawyer and resides at Fairfax, Renville county. He was born in the town of Cairo, said county, thirty-seven years ago, and was the first white child born in said town. His father was one of the defenders of Fort Ridgely, under Colonel Sheehan, in 1862. In August of the same year, at Middle Creek, Renville county, his mother's first husband was killed by the Indians, and she and two infant sons were taken captive. Until twenty-two years of age young Rieke lived on his father's farm, attended the common schools, and took a course in a business college. Then, until 1893, when he took up law, he was in the grain and farm implement business at Fairfax. He has served two terms as county attorney of Renville county. May 29, 1895, he was married to Lena Maurer.

Id. at 680.

⁹ *Fairfax Standard*, February 12, 1903, at 4.

In 1907 he listed a few corporate clients in the following sketch in Albert Nelson Marquis's *The Book of Minnesotans*:

RIEKE, August V., lawyer; born at Cairo, Minn., Aug. 15, 1865; son of George and Sophia (Schweer) Rieke; educated in public schools and at Curtiss Business College. Minneapolis. First white child born in town of Cairo, Minn. (parents were pioneers of Minnesota, the father taking part in siege of Fort Ridgely, 1862; mother captured by Indians, who first killed her first husband; released to General Sibley after six weeks of captivity); lived on farm until 22 years of age; went into grain business and later followed farm implement business at Fairfax, Minn. Entered law office of Hon. John A. Dalzell, Fairfax, 1893; admitted to the bar, Feb. 14, 1898, and has since been engaged in practice of law. County attorney of Renville Co., 1899-1903; member state senate, 1903-07. Director F. & M. State Bank, of Arlington, Minn., Fairfax Telephone Co.; general manager Renville Rural Telephone Co. Republican. Methodist. Mason, Knight Templar, Shriner. Married at Fairfax, Minn., May 29, 1895, to Miss Lena Maurer. Address: Fairfax, Minn.¹⁰

In 1909 he formed a partnership with Alfred U. Hamrum, a lawyer from Renville County, and in 1912 they relocated to Minneapolis.¹¹

¹⁰ Albert Nelson Marquis, *The Book of Minnesotans* 428 (1907).

¹¹ The following profile of Alfred U. Hamrum was published in the *History of Renville County*:

A. U. Hamrum was born in Camp township, this county, February 29, 1884, and here grew to manhood. He attended the public schools of his native town and of Fairfax, and in 1904 graduated from the high school at Le Sueur, Minn. For a year he taught school in District 1, Renville county. In June, 1908, he graduated from the College of Law at the University of Minnesota, was admitted to the bar, and in September opened an office in Franklin. In 1909 he became associated with A. V. Rieke under the firm name Rieke & Hamrum, at Fairfax. In July, 1912, the office of the firm was moved to the Metropolitan Life building, Minneapolis.

Two years later his political ambitions caught fire again, prompting him to run for attorney general on the Progressive Party ticket. The Minnesota Progressive Party, a remnant of T. R.'s Bull Moose Party, was not an efficient political machine. About sixty delegates—including six women—attended its state convention on April 24, 1914, in St. Paul. It endorsed candidates for all state-wide offices except governor, leading to columns of ridicule in newspapers.¹² Eventually Hugh T. Halbert of St. Paul agreed to run for governor. The election was not close and Rieke came in a distant third in the contest for attorney general. The results of the election on November 3, 1914, were:

Lyndon A. Smith (inc. & Republican).....	195,372
Neil M. Cronin (Democrat).....	94,025
August V. Rieke (Progressive).....	16,736 ¹³

Though he had moved from Renville County, he and his family had been so prominent in its affairs that he was still profiled in a two-volume county history published in 1916:

August V. Rieke was born at Cairo, Minn., August 15, 1865, son of George and Sophia (Schweer) Rieke. He received his early education in the public schools of his locality and later attended the Curtiss Business College at Minneapolis. He lived on the home farm until twenty-two years of age and then went into the grain business and later followed the farm implement business at Fairfax, Minn. In 1893 he

¹² *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, April 25, 1914, at 21 (“Progressive ticket left without head. State conference adjourns without naming a gubernatorial candidate. Committee of ten appointed to make canvass of available material”); *Minneapolis Evening Journal*, April 24, 1914, at 18 (“Moose candidate is hard to find.”); *Fairfax Standard*, April 30, 1914, at 3 (“Minnesota ‘Bull Moosers’ to the number of sixty put in the entire day Friday trying to pick a candidate for governor and finally quit in disgust.”).

¹³ 1915 Blue Book, at 536-37.

entered the law office of John A. Dalzell, of Fairfax, and was admitted to the bar February 14, 1898, and has since engaged in the practice of law. From 1899 to 1902 he was county attorney for Renville county and from 1903 to 1907 a member of the state senate. He is now practicing law at Minneapolis.¹⁴

He was active in the Minnesota State Bar Association and as Chairman of the Committee on Legislation delivered a report on “Results of the Activities of the Minnesota State Bar Association in the Legislative Session of 1917” to the state bar convention that year.¹⁵ He continued practicing law in Minneapolis and had the pleasure of seeing two children become lawyers and join him in his practice.¹⁶

He died on January 16, 1944, at age seventy-eight. The following obituary was published in the *Fairfax Standard*:

A Distinguished Pioneer Passes

August V. Rieke, of Hopkins, Native
Son of Cairo, Prominent and
Respected Citizen Buried Here

¹⁴ James McBride George, note 5, at 1247 (1916).

¹⁵ 1 *Minnesota Law Review* 544-547 (1917). The proceedings of State Bar Association were published in the first volume of the *Law Review*. That issue is posted in the “Journals” category in the Archives of the MLHP.

¹⁶ Bonita F. Rieke was admitted October 6, 1924. Roll of Attorneys, Supreme Court, State of Minnesota, 1858-1970, at 184 (Minnesota Digital Library. Maurice H. Rieke was admitted on August 30, 1926. *Id.* at 194.

A. V. Rieke came to his old home for the last time on Tuesday, and was buried near the beloved old farm home in Cairo, as he had wished to be.

Staunch and sturdy at 78, he had visited here, and transacted business only a few weeks ago; but Saturday morning, January 15, he suffered a heart attack. He was taken to Northwestern hospital in Minneapolis, put under an oxygen tent, and specialists gave him every care and attention; but about 4: 00 a. m., on Sunday morning, he passed away.

. . .

August Victor Rieke was born August 15, 1865, on the home family in Cairo, then called Mud Lake, the son of George and Sophia Schweer Rieke. It is said he was the first white child to be born in Cairo Township. His early years in the midst of the happy growing family, were very happy ones. He loved to work, and to play, to study, and whatever he did, he did most thoroughly, most efficiently. He attended the neighboring schools, and later, the Curtiss business college in Minneapolis, but for the first 22 years of his life he called that lovely farm nestled in a cup, between rolling hills and the lake, "home".

Then he became interested in the grain business, the implement business, in Fairfax. In 1893 he entered the law office of John A. Dalzell, in Fairfax, and began to read law. In 1898 he became county attorney for Renville. Then, in 1903 he became State Senator, holding that office one term, until 1907.

On May 29, 1895, he was married to Ms. Lena Maurer, of Fairfax. Of this happy union ten children were born, who with their mother deeply mourn the loss of a most devoted husband and father....

In 1912 the A. V. Rieke family moved to Minneapolis, where Mr. Rieke built a fine law practice, and, in time was joined by his son, Maurice, his daughter, Miss Bonita. Until about five years ago they lived in Minneapolis, but then A. V. built a beautiful and unusual country home of logs near Hopkins, amid the beautiful countryside of Christmas Lake. The home is very large, modern in every respect, and here Mr. Rieke decided to take life easier.

Last year he bought a young team of oxen, for his pleasure, and broke them, so that he could drive them.

He was always a deeply religious man, being a very faithful member of the Methodist Church in Cairo, and Fairfax and the first years in Minneapolis. He was a Sunday School teacher for 63 years, and was as sincere, as earnest, in that work as in any other he undertook.¹⁷

At memorial services for the Hennepin County Bar Association on March 21, 1944, the following tribute was read by his son:

A. V. Rieke was born in Cairo Township, Renville County, Minnesota, August 15, 1865, and died January 16, 1944. It is stated that he was the first white child to have been born in

¹⁷ *Fairfax Standard*, January 20, 1944, at 1 (paragraphs describing the funeral and listing survivors omitted).

that county. He passed through many of the hardships and endured the privations of the early settlers in this country.

His parents were of the sturdy, hard working class, and he inherited much of that trait.

On May 29, 1895, he was married to Carolyn Mauer, who survives him.

Their companionship was most happy, and the family increased by the birth of seven girls and three boys, all of whom are living, and all in Hennepin County, except Clarion R., who is at Camp Wheeler, Georgia.

As a father and provider for his family I can not speak too highly.

The fact that all remain so near the home indicates a close bond of love and affection

“To make a happy fireside chime
To weans and wife,
That’s the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.”

As a lawyer, Mr. Rieke was quite successful. A good student, and a hard worker. He kept close to his professional work, except he was a member of the State Senate for one term, and County Attorney of Renville County for a number of years.

He will be missed by his family and by his many friends and associates.

DEPARTED FRIENDS

The dead friends live and always will;
Their presence holders around is still.
It seemed to me they come to share
Each joy or sorrow that we bear.
Among the living I can feel
The sweet departed spirits steal,
And whether it be weal or woe,
I walk with those I used to know.
I can recall them to my side
Whenever I am struggle-tried;
I've but to wish for them, and they
Come trooping gayly down the way,
And I can tell to them my grief
And from their presence find relief.
In sacred memories below
Still live the friends of long ago.¹⁸

—‡—

Related Article

For a memorial to his son see “Maurice H. Rieke (1905-1976)” in “Hennepin County Bar Memorials – 1977” at 21 (MLHP, 2012).

—‡— —‡—

Posted MLHP: January 1, 2020.

¹⁸ The name of the author of this memorial is not listed but it likely was his son Maurice.