

MEMORIAL

WILLIAM T. VALENTINE

(April 20, 1849 - January 23, 1919)

**DISTRICT COURT
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
WINONA COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

WINONA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

APRIL 1919

WILLIAM T. VALENTINE (1849 – 1919)

To his comrades at the bar, William T. Valentine was “a Winona County boy” who had a “varied career.” He was educated in that city’s public schools and taught there for awhile, graduated the University of Michigan Law Department, returned to his home town to practice corporate law, served one term in the state legislature and, in the late 1890s contracted a severe case of “gold fever.” He went prospecting in Alaska but was not lucky. In 1898, his health in decline, he returned to Minnesota, settling in Long Prairie, the seat of Todd County.

In 1904, he ran for a seat on the Seventh Judicial District court. The district was composed of Benton, Douglas, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, Clay, Becker and Wadena Counties. He was a Democrat, who had lived in the district a few years. The other candidates were John W. Mason, a prominent railroad lawyer, a Republican and a thirty-three year resident of Otter Tail County, and the incumbent, L. L. Baxter, who had been active in Democratic politics before his appointment to the bench in 1882. The results of the election on November 8, 1904, were:

John W. Mason.....	13,676
William F. Valentine (sic).....	6,121
Luther L. Baxter (inc.).....	13,801 ¹

Valentine may have siphoned Democratic votes from Baxter, but he may also have split the anti-incumbent vote, which was larger than usual that year. This uncertainty reinforces the

¹ 1905 Blue Book, at 512. Valentine’s middle initial was misprinted in the Legislative Manual.

For biographical data on Mason, see “John W. Mason (1846-1927)” (MLHP, 2012), and the “Foreword” to John W. Mason, “The Otter Tail County Bar” (MLHP, 2008-2012) (published first, 1916).

A biographical sketch of Luther Loren Baxter (1832-1915) will be posted someday on the MLHP.

conclusion that it is very difficult to identify the factors effecting judicial elections.

Sometime later, he returned to his hometown and reestablished his law practice. He served on the municipal court and as a federal Bankruptcy Referee, a position he held from mid-1917 to January 23, 1919, when he died.² The next day, the *Winona Republican* reported his passing but, inexplicably, misprinted his middle initial in the headline:

**WILLIAM J.
VALENTINE
DIES AT 69**

William T. Valentine, aged 69, member of the Winona County Bar association and who had practiced law in Winona for over 35 years, died Thursday evening at his home, 617 Lafayette street, from a combination of heart and kidney troubles from which he had suffered for some time past. He was overcome at his office Monday evening by an acute attack and had to be taken to his home. It was thot at the time he would recover, but these hopes were not sustained. Arrangements for the funeral are dependent upon word received from a daughter, Mrs. A. M. Nasser of Norwood, O. Another daughter, Mrs. A. J. Kleese, and the widow, both residing at the family home, also survive, as well as a brother, John Valentine, a farmer at Rollingstone.

A meeting of the Winona Bar association is to be held to take suitable action concerning Mr. Valentine's death.

² He succeeded William Burns (ca. 1867-1917). See "Referees and Judges of the Bankruptcy Court for the District of Minnesota, 1898-2013" (MLHP, 2010).

Mr. Valentine had served as special municipal judge of Winona by appointment of Gov. J. A. A. Burnquist from the summer of 1916 to April, 1917. For six years he was assistant city attorney under Richard A. Randall prior to the time Karl Finkelnburg assumed the duties of this office. He served one term in the state legislature. In addition to holding these public offices Mr. Valentine has looked after his private law practice.

William T. Valentine was born April 20, 1849, and spent his early years near a Galena, Ill. 1855 he moved with his parents to Winona. He attended the Winona public high and normal schools, being graduated from the last named institution in 1874. He attended the University of Minnesota for two years and then took up teaching. In 1880 he entered the University of Michigan and began the study of law. After graduation from that course in 1883 he began the practice of law in Winona, and continued in it ever since except for two years spent at Long Prairie and a year on the Pacific coast and in Alaska. In 1884 he was chosen as a representative from Winona County to the legislature. Mr. Valentine's marriage to Mary Ellison took place in May, 1878, at Beaver in Winona county.

In April 1919, the Winona County bar Association presented the following memorial to Valentine in district court:³

MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT.

On January 24th, 1919, a practising attorney of Winona, Minnesota, for over thirty years and a member of the Winona County Bar, passed to the great beyond. He had been in feeble physical condition for over a year previous but kept

³ This memorial can be found at the Historical Society. It is reprinted as originally typed. The date of Valentine's death is wrong—he died on the 23rd, not the 24th.

tenaciously to his office, doing what he could, until practically the end.

Mr. Valentine was a Winona County boy. He graduated from our Normal School here; taught school, attended and completed his course in the Law Department of the University of Michigan and shortly thereafter settled in Winona having been admitted to practise before the courts of this state.

Our deceased brother in the law had a varied career. During the early days of that institution, he was attorney for the J. R. Watkins medical Company; he represented this county in the lower house of the Minnesota Legislature for one term. In 1898 he went to Alaska, but was obliged to return to a less rigorous climate after some months spent prospecting in that territory. On his return, he settled in Long Prairie, Minnesota, and was an unsuccessful candidate for Judge of the District Court while there. Later he resumed his practice at Winona, where he held for a number of years the office of Assistant City Attorney for the Municipal court of Winona. In 1916 Governor Burnquist appointed Mr. Valentine Special Judge of the Municipal Court for the Municipality of Winona, and in 1917, he received the appointment of Referee in Bankruptcy for this District, which position he held until the day of his death.

He died at the age of sixty-nine and is survived by a widow and two married daughters.

**S. H. Somsen
J. M. George
Jas. J. Fitzpatrick**

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