

In Memoriam

Judge Clyde R. White

July 2, 1876 • November 2, 1935



Hennepin County Bar Association
Hennepin County District Court
Minneapolis, Minnesota
February 8, 1936

Judge Clyde R. White
1876 - 1935

Clyde R. White was born at Pine Island, Minnesota, July 2, 1876. His father was a successful lawyer who held various public offices in Goodhue County, and was a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1856 and 1873. He died while Clyde is hardly more than a boy, and the son had early experience of the responsibilities of life and the care of his widowed mother. After completing his schooling at Pine Island he taught in district, grade and high schools for five years. He then studied at Carleton College and University of Minnesota, receiving the degree of B. Sc. at the University in 1903, completing his law course in 1905. During all his undergraduate and law studies he supported himself by teaching, and continued to teach geometry in the North High School until January, 1907. His former pupils give testimony to the high quality of his teaching. He would have won distinction in that profession had he not left it for the law.

Early in 1907 he entered the office of Frank Healy, then City Attorney of Minneapolis, as assistant in charge of criminal work. The writer, then a judge in the Municipal Court, was at once attracted by his character and ability, and a warm and enduring friendship began. In 1909 he was advanced by Mr. Healy to the defense of damage suits. From 1911 to 1913 he was engaged in private practice with Mr. Healy and Charles W. LaDu. During part of 1912 and 1913 he was Specialist City Attorney under Judge Daniel Fish, and assisted in the preparation for trial of the notable case of City of Minneapolis vs. Minneapolis Gas Light Company. He then practiced alone for several years. In 1917 he was appointed to the Intelligence Division of the Public Safety Commission of Minnesota, which work he continued until February, 1918, when he took charge of organizing War Savings Societies in the state. During the war he was registered in "Class A-1, no exemption claimed", but was not called for military service.

In 1920 Governor Burnquist tendered to him the post of County Attorney of Hennepin County, to fill a vacancy, but the appointment was declined for personal reasons. From 1922 to 1925 he practiced at Wadena, Minnesota, when for a while he was Assistant County attorney. In January, 1925, having returned to Minneapolis, he was appointed by Governor Christiansen judge of the Municipal Court, remaining in that office until his death, November 2,

1935. During the latter years of his incumbency he was senior judge. The Hennepin County Bar Association paid him an unusual compliment in adopting on January 29, 1925, a resolution thanking Governor Christiansen for the appointment.

In 1925 Judge White married Isabelle Gipford, who survives him with two children and another child of this marriage.

In non-professional fields Judge White was a reasonable man, full of whimsical humor, tolerant, modest, approachable, interested in people and in public affairs. He was thoroughly human, with foibles like the rest of us, but they were of the sort that harmed nobody. In politics he was a Republican, but never an extreme partisan. He was a member of the legal fraternity Delta, Meta Phi, and the Lions and Commonwealth Cubs and the Knights of Pythias, a Scottish Rite Mason, president of the Society of First Friends (an organization concerned with the rehabilitation of discharged prisoners) and an official of the Simpson M. E. Church. Loyalty to his friends and to the groups with which he was associated was one of his conspicuous traits. His work at the bar was marked by strict integrity, high professional standards and untiring industry. There has recently come to the writer's attention of his own estimation of Clyde White, written early in 1924. I then said: "He can be relied on to discharge any trust committed to him with the utmost fidelity, and he will bring to any task he shall undertake great industry, keen intelligence and the fruits of a varied experience". These words were amply justified by the latter career of their subject.

No more fair and conscientious judge ever sat in Hennepin County. His conception of the judicial office was an exalted one, and he fully appreciated the great opportunities and responsibilities of the Municipal Court, with its wide and close contacts with the everyday life of the people. In the trial of cases he was a model of patience; while his unassuming dignity, thorough professional equipment and alertness of mind made it very difficult for any lawyer who was disposed to do so to becloud his judgment on questions of procedure and evidence. From intimate knowledge of his methods of work I can say that his decisions were always the result of careful study, reached with all necessary courage and unbiased personal considerations of any sort.

I quote the words of one of his colleagues:

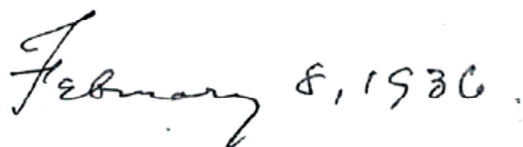
"He was scrupulously careful always to remain unprejudiced and open-minded in any case that was before him or that might come before him. In certain cases involving labor he refused even to read the newspapers while the trials were pending. After his death there was found a box covered with dust in which requests and demands of various organizations, attempting to influence him in those cases. It was learned that he never saw these letters but arranged with his reporter to keep them together until after the case was over."

Quoting further from a colleague:

"He had a deep sense of obligation to his work. He believed a judge should remain on duty during the working hours of the day. He was responsible more than any other man for having the judges on duty at all times in the summer. Although this arrangement reduced vacations he desired it in order better to serve the members of the bar, he thought, might not receive sufficient consideration if only one judge were available".

Evidently Judge White brought over into his work on the bench the attitude of the teacher, for one of the most common expressions of the bar has been recognition of his helpfulness to young practitioners.

The honor of presenting this tribute rightfully belonged to one of Judge White's associates in the Municipal Court. Doubtless the invitation came to me because of our known friendship, - a friendship covering more than a quarter century and growing closer and richer with the passing years. I think it may not be unfitting if I close with a very personal word. The man more than the lawyer and the judge, and the man I knew. I will cherish his memory with the deep respect and affection until life shall last.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward R. White".A handwritten date in cursive script that reads "February 8, 1936".



After a conference of municipal court judges, Judge White is selected to try 37 persons on disorderly conduct charges resulting from the unemployment demonstration riot at city hall.

Date of photograph: April 10, 1934.

Minneapolis Tribune

Minneapolis Newspaper Photograph Collection

Hennepin County Library



Mrs. Clyde R. White is elected vice president of the Winchell Circle,
Kings Daughters and Sons.

Photographer: Shemild Photo

Date of photograph: October 27, 1936.

Minneapolis Tribune

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Credits

The photograph on the first page was taken on May 2, 1925.
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