

MEMORIAL

WILLIAM J. QUINN  
(1889 – 1932)

RAMSEY COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

April 15, 1933

## MEMORIAL

TO THE BAR OF RAMSEY COUNTY:

As testimony of its profound regard for  
The ability, scholarship, and integrity  
Displayed in the life of the late  
William J. Quinn.

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William J. Quinn was born at Athens, Wisconsin, on December 6, 1889, the oldest son of John F. and Mary J. Quinn. His father was born and reared in Cook County, Illinois. His mother was a native of Washington County, Minnesota.

William J. Quinn was reared in St. Paul, Minnesota; he attended the common and parochial schools, Cretin High School and the College of St. Thomas. After finishing his college work and when at the age of eighteen years, he was appointed secretary to the Honorable Daniel W. Lawyer, then Mayor of the City of St. Paul. During the time he was so employed, he attended the night classes of the St. Paul College of Law and was graduated from that institution in 1911. He was admitted to practice in the Courts of this state the same year.

Mr. Quinn was married to Miss Celina La Rocque, daughter of Cyril and Celina La Rocque, on September 10, 1910. Three children were born of them: William J. Quinn, Jr., George Edward Quinn and Marie Quinn, all of whom were born and reared in the family residence in St. Paul and who now survive him.

Mr. William J. Quinn began the active practice of law in St. Paul in the fall of 1911 with offices in the Shubert Building. He remained in this building but a short time, however, and during the following winter he removed his offices to the New York Life Building, where he was first associated with Mr. Robert Petzke, now of the Minneapolis Bar. When Mr. Petzka removed his office to Minneapolis, Mr. Quinn associated himself with Mr. James Mattimore of the Ramsey County Bar, and later

with Mr. Daniel J. Hollihan and Mr. Eugene F. Mathews of the Ramsey County Bar. In 1928 he entered into a partnership with Mr. Linus J. Hammond of the Ramsey County Bar, which partnership continued up to and until the spring of 1929. He remained in the Commerce Building until the first part of April, 1932, when he removed his offices to the Globe Building and associated himself with Messrs. William Seward, Walter Ryan and Charles Winter. Outside of the one instance where he entered into a partnership arrangement with Mr. Hammond, he always preferred the individual way of practicing law.

Early in his life, Mr. Quinn took a deep interest in politics. As stated before, between the years of 1908 and 1910, he was secretary to the Honorable D. W. Lawyer, Mayor of the City of St. Paul. In 1912, he was candidate for the State Legislature and, in the face of large and aggressive opposition, he made a very credible showing. In 1914, he was a member of the Democratic State Central Committee and was also a member of the Executive Committee appointed by the Democratic State Central Committee. In 1916, he was a district delegate and attended the National Democratic Convention at St. Louis, Missouri. In 1920, he was a district delegate to and attended the Democratic National Convention at San Francisco. Between the years 1921 and 1924, Mr. Quinn was in charge of the pre-convention campaign of Governor Alfred E. Smith for the Democratic nominee for president and was successful in pledging a majority of the delegates for his candidacy. At this Convention Mr. Quinn was a delegate and also assistant recording secretary of the Convention. The nomination of Governor Alfred E. Smith was presented to the Convention by the now President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Mr. William J. Quinn made one of the seconding speeches for Mr. Smith. From 1925 to 1928, Mr. Quinn was in charge of the pre-convention campaign for delegates to the Democratic National Convention in 1928, and was also counselor and advisor to the Democratic National Committee for the State of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and North and South Dakota. In 1928, the entire Minnesota delegation to the National Convention at Houston, Texas, was pledged for Governor Alfred E. Smith, which was the result of the strenuous efforts of Mr. Quinn. Mr. William J. Quinn was a district delegate of Ramsey County to the National Convention in Houston and was also very active on the floor of the Convention in an endeavor to secure the nomination of the Honorable Alfred E. Smith for the Presidency, and he was so nominated. During the presidential campaign of 1928, Mr.

Quinn was actively in charge of the campaign in Minnesota and was appointed Chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee by Mr. Andrew E. Nelson of Duluth, the then leader of the Party in Minnesota. During the campaign, however, the Democratic National Committee in New York, feeling it needed his advice and counsel on matters in the west, ordered Mr. Quinn to New York for that purpose and he remained in New York during the remainder of the presidential campaign. After the presidential election in 1928, Mr. Quinn retired to the background as far as politics was concerned, except as an advisor. He was a strong and ardent supporter of the now President, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Mr. Quinn was exceptionally urbane in his conduct. Always meticulous in personal appearance, he presented the picture of true refinement and culture.

His personality was extremely magnetic and dynamic. His alertness of action, his quickness of thought, his humor and knack for story-telling, his ability to recollect details of his experiences far in the past, always made him liked and remembered. His personal following extended over many states. The members of the Bar knew him as Bill Quinn. He was a profound scholar, a great reader and a deep thinker. He was not limited to the narrow scope of his profession; he sought satisfaction upon all subjects of interest and it was always a pleasure to meet and converse with him upon questions of public importance. He was an easy and forceful speaker and knew how to get in touch with people and had an exceptional ability in managing men.

As a political leader he won national fame. He had the knack of gathering followers by the thousands, and to mould them into organizations for the purpose of gaining his political end. He was a past master of "convention tactics" and always seemed to know how to handle any situation that arose to interrupt his plans. Although he was merciless in his treatment of those who bolted his plans, those who were the subject of his wrath, admired his courage and his ability and rejoiced afterwards at the shrewdness of their adversary. He was called into counsel by national political leaders...he dictated resolutions and platforms of National conventions...he engineered and steered issues, platforms and resolutions through many a stormy floor battle and he very seldom came out second best.

As a lawyer he had a very extensive and lucrative practice. His general well-groomed appearance, his colorful personality, his resonant voice, his ability to express himself clearly and forcefully, his quickness and speed of thought made him an exceptional trial lawyer and a feared adversary. Although his civil practice was large, he took a great deal of delight in criminal practice. Nothing pleased him more than to represent the poor and the unfortunate, the downtrodden. It was then that we found Bill Quinn at his best. He had the law at his fingertips, and he knew how to marshal facts and his retentive memory served him well and often in his many trials. As one prosecutor has stated, “We never knew what to expect from Bill Quinn...he always seemed to be two jumps ahead of me.”

His life was one of action. He took a humorous delight in a good scrap. He started out at eighteen years, and from eighteen to the time of his death, his days were packed with action. Rest was not in his makeup and the speed of his life soon took its toll. The last few years of his life his health failed rapidly. His attempts to continue the fast pace he had set only hurried the inevitable. He died in the City of St. Paul on the 19th day of September, A. D. 1932, at the age of forty-three years, beloved of his professional brethren.

The sympathy of this Bar goes forth to his family and friends in the loss they and we have sustained. We move this Memorial be spread upon the records of this Court and copies be mailed to the immediate members of the family of our departed friend.

                  /s/                    
CHAIRMAN

          /s/  Linus J. Hammand            
VICE-CHAIRMAN

          /s/  Eugene F. Mathews          

          /s/  Charles H. Winter          

          /s/  William H. Seward            
(Committee.)

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