

## [Bowers, George Henry]

### GEORGE BOWERS PASSES AFTER INTERESTING CAREER Practiced Law in Canton for More Than Fifty Years

George H. Bowers, for half a century a practicing attorney of Canton and one of the most outstanding figures in the political life of the county during most of those years, passed away at his home, Park Street, Friday evening after weeks of wearing illness. Mr. Bowers was known for weeks to be in a critical state of health. Even after his condition was generally known he continued at his office, practicing in court and attending to his rather heavy work during the annual session of the Board of Supervisors. He saw the Board of Supervisors finish its work in December, and from that time had not been actively engaged, though he continued to come to his office for a few hours, until this became physically impossible.

Friends visited him in his home during wearing weeks, and found him resigned, carrying on uncomplainingly. During the past few days he lapsed from time to time into unconsciousness. The end came quietly Friday evening.

George Henry Bowers was born at West Windsor, Vt., the son of Charles B. and Alma Hadley Bowers, on March 29, 1866. He attended the Green Mountain Seminary in South Woodstock, a school of quite notable reputation seventy years ago. Here taught Dr. John Stebbins Lee before coming to Canton when St. Lawrence University was established in the fifties, Dr. Lee becoming the first president of the College of Letters and Science. Among others later connected with the story of St. Lawrence who many years ago were connected with Green Mountain Seminary were Dr. Henry Priest, for years a member of the faculty of St. Lawrence University, and his wife, Flora Curtis Priest. He also attended a school, the head of which was Oscar H. Perry. Perry later came to Canton as principal of Canton Union School, and it was through Perry's advice George Bowers came to Canton and entered the office of Ledyard P. Hale as a student of law in 1889.

He graduated from Windsor High School in 1886 and for three years taught school, before coming to Canton. The writer of this saw George Bowers the first day after his arrival in Canton, as he visited Canton Union School and the principal had him sit on the rostrum. Marching down the students passed out of the old chapel, the writer stopped at the rostrum and inquired of the principal who the visitor was. "Oh," said Perry, "it's Mr. Bowers, from Vermont, who is to study law in Mr. Hale's office." Though the opportunity was there, the principal made no introduction, but a little later on the writer became acquainted to the young law clerk, and that acquaintance lasted through the years.

Mr. Bowers, the student of law, was a diligent pupil. He absorbed law and he entered into the work of practice, trying cases in justice court, going out of town, trying cases in Squire W. N. Dean's rough and tumble court in the town of Clare. All this time he was making acquaintances. Ledyard Hale had a large practice and he turned cases that we not involved over to the young clerk, who went at them and tried them to the satisfaction of clients and with unvarying success. He wrote his papers on a typewriter, using the old two fingered system, never changing this much through the years, though he turned out a remarkable amount of work.

The writer came into the Hale & Bowers office in 1894, for at that time Bowers, who had been admitted to practice, was a member of the firm of Hale & Bowers. For two years this association of the writer with George Bowers was unbroken, and the friendship formed in those years was never broken.

When Ledyard P. Hale was elected county judge the firm was dissolved and George Bowers entered on practice independently. Later on a partnership was formed with the late Lawrence Russell, son of Judge Leslie W. Russell. The firm had offices over what is now the Walter E. Russell Drug Store. While there existed a partnership, clients found that it was in name only.

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Each attorney had their own offices and each had their own clients. Sometimes they tried cases together, but rarely was that the case.

During all those years the practice of Mr. Bowers grew rapidly. He was able to turn out a remarkable burden of work. During the early years he had been a correspondent for the Watertown Daily Times. He had other strings besides the law business, but he never neglected his clients or the law. He was attorney for industrialists and bankers, and men and women of small fortune and larger fortune. The poorest man in town could come and receive service, and at times the charge was nothing, or he'd say, "fifty cents." He'd charge two dollars for drawing a will that other attorneys would charge twenty-five or fifty dollars. It was easy for him to do this work. It was only a few minutes with his quick mental movements and the use of the typewriter.

Among those he served for years as attorney were James Spears, banker and lumberman, who had at times considerable litigation, all of it handled by George Bowers. Spears was President of St. Lawrence County National Bank, but that didn't prevent Reuben T. Wells, a business rival of Spears and president of the rival bank down street, from employing George Bowers. John Bird, another large lumber operator, always had Bowers. Henry Potter of Colton and Ransom Long were his clients. The late G. Ernest Simms, who had at times actions involving cases to be tried in the federal court, employed him. During the more recent years of his practice Mr. Bowers had a number of manslaughter and murder cases. He tried these with unvarying success, his clients faring well. He was a master before a jury. One could hear him addressing a jury in that quiet manner, without raising his voice. He seemed to take the twelve men or men and women into his confidence and he had remarkable success as a pleader before a jury.

George H. Bowers was not a joiner. He didn't belong to fraternities or clubs or other bodies. He was a member of the Universalist Church and was found there on Sundays. He was interested in the public schools and for many years served on the Board of Education, and on the teachers committees of that. He was a trustee of the Canton Theological School, and secretary of the board for many years, and a trustee of Clinton Liberal Institute. He was one of the founders of Fairview Cemetery Association and an officer of that association for many years.

Shortly after coming to Canton he became one of the assistants to Clerk Charles A. Hale of the Board of Supervisors. That was in the year 1890. He was with the Board during every annual session since then, up to and including the past fall session. He was the legal advisor of the Board. He advised he supervisors as to law. He drew their resolutions. For over thirty years he acted as county attorney, but in fact he was county attorney for nearly fifty years. He saved the county litigation. He eased the county and members of it Board and some of its sheriffs out of tight spots.

When the proposal was made to divide the township of Hopkinton, creating the new town of Piercefield, Arthur Atwood, supervisor of Hopkinton, went to George Bowers and Bowers did the rest. When it was proposed to take a part of the town of Clifton and add it to the smaller township of Clare, the job was given to George H. Bowers, and that was as far back as 1896 or thereabouts. Bowers laid the plans and settled the disputed question by a town meeting and gave the people of Clarksboro what they wanted.

George H. Bowers during his many years on the clerical staff of the Board of Supervisors furnished the [news]papers of the county a summary of the proceedings of the board during its annual session. Most of the papers found that good copy. He likewise wrote the court stories for the Canton papers for over forty years, and his copy was good.

During all these busy years he was able to give time to other things. He was a member of the board of directors of A. Barton Hepburn Hospital, Ogdensburg. He was a director of the St. Lawrence County National Bank, its attorney, and at times chairman of the Board; he was a

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trustee and treasurer of the First Universalist Church of Canton, and in 1935 was elected President of New York State Universalist convention.

He attended conventions, political and church association conventions, and his voice was usually heard, expressing something that was vital. He was a temperance advocate all of his life and during the bitter local option fights gave his time and energy fighting to make the town dry. He was a teetotaler himself, always.

For many years he was attorney for the village of Canton, and likewise attorney for the Canton Savings & Loan Association. So many were the efforts he put forth in every conceivable direction that one could hardly touch anything that he did not lend a helping hand to, were it a good cause, or a good activity of any kind.

He was for many years active as a member of the St. Lawrence County Bar Association and served as its secretary and its president. He was for a strong and able judiciary and was always found actively working for those candidates for the office of supreme court justice in whom he had confidence. He was one of the first members of the St. Lawrence County Bar to lend his support to the candidacy of Ellsworth C. Lawrence of Malone, and largely through his effort Mr. Lawrence received the nomination. He was likewise for Daniel Imrie, of Glens Falls, for the office of Supreme Court Justice and though there was opposition in the county, he saw Judge Imrie nominated and elected. When Judge Herrick, a Democrat appointee, sought election at the annual election, Mr. Bowers espoused the candidacy of Christopher J. Heffernan of Amsterdam, and though there was Republican support of Herrick, Heffernan was elected.

For many years Mr. Bowers formed a warm friendship with Frank A. Augsbury of Ogdensburg. This friendship originated in the old days when the Augsburies were engaged in the paper mills at Pyrites. James Spears, president of the St. Lawrence County National Bank, was a friend of Mr. Augsbury also, and Frank Augsbury will always remember that association and his association with George Bowers, the latter representing him in much large litigation, in a manner that was very successful. The Watertown Daily Times, in an editorial Saturday evening, refers to a story told by Frank A. Augsbury about George H. Bowers.

There is an endless amount of interesting things about George H. Bowers that could be told. In his late years he took as a partner in his law office, Richard E. Heffernan, and this association continued to the death of Mr. Heffernan.

Mr. Bowers was a warm friend of Dr. James M. Payson and visited Dr. Payson weekly, at least, at his home on Court street during his last years, when the good doctor was unable to leave his home.

Mr. Bowers was happily married to Miss Mary Jackman, a schoolmate of his in his Vermont school days, at South Pomfret, Vt., Aug. 30, 1894. They made their home in Canton. They first owned a home on Powers street, but many years ago purchased the home of the late Major Duncan M. Robertson, on Park street, which had been their home through the balance of their married life. It is interesting that Mrs. Bowers was a native of Plymouth, Vt., the birthplace of President Calvin Coolidge, and her father, Edwin S. Jackman, was a classmate of John Coolidge, father of Calvin Coolidge. The married life of Mr. and Mrs. Bowers was an ideally happy one. In spite of his voluminous business and associations outside, he found much time to spend with his family in the home.

Funeral services were conducted Sunday afternoon at three at the First Universalist Church of which he had been a member from his first coming to Canton. The service was simple but impressive. There were present members of the Board of Supervisors, county officers, and many others, filling the church well. The front of the church at the pulpit was massed with flowers, [in] tribute to the dead.

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The Rev. Hugh S. Tigner, pastor, read the service and made the prayer. The eulogium was pronounced by Dr. J. Murray Atwood, Dean of Canton Theological School, who had the acquaintance of Mr. Bowers of over fifty years standing, since the latter had come to Canton in 1889. The speaker paid tribute to the integrity and character of George H. Bowers, whose whole life was an example of industry, integrity, honesty. He referred to the great value Mr. Bowers had been to the people of Canton and to those of the county, and described him as a religious man, who believed sincerely that religion was necessary not only for the individual but for all the people.

The bearers were old friends and business associates, County Judge Andrew J. Hanmer; Roy H. Bassett, President of the Canton Savings and Loan Association; Ralph H. Michaels, president of the First National Bank; Robert Becker, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors; Morris P. Hawley, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors; Dr. Sidney S. Robins, of the faculty of St. Lawrence University.

The body was placed in the receiving vault of Fairview Cemetery. Interment will be made in Fairview in the spring.

Mr. Bowers is survived by a son and three daughters, as follows: Attorney Charles E. Bowers, of Canton, St. Lawrence County assistant district attorney; Mrs. Arthur (Fern) Dickens, Kenmore; Mrs. Lloyd (Adaline) Blankman, St. Johnsville; and Miss Constance Bowers, librarian at the Hamburg High School. Six grandchildren: Mary Josette and Christine Bowers of Canton; David and Mary Lou Dickens of Kenmore; and Betty and Edward Blankman of St. Johnsville.

An only sister, Miss Bessie A. Bowers, has been with her brother as a companion and homekeeper since the death of Mrs. Bowers in 1929. His older daughter, Mrs. Dickens of Kenmore, came to Canton several weeks ago and was with her father during his illness.

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