

## [Devendorf, Irving Rozelle]

### Death Takes Ex-Supreme Court Justice I. R. Devendorf NOTED JURIST'S LONG CAREER COMES TO END AFTER LENGTHY ILLNESS Gained Wide Prominence During Trial of Chester Gillette for Murder— Prosecutor in 1888

Herkimer—Former Supreme Court Justice Irving R. Devendorf, 75, who presided at the famous Chester Gillette murder case, died today.

His last request was that flowers be omitted at his funeral because of economic conditions.

The retired jurist had been ill for some time, but it was only two days ago that his condition became serious.

Irving Rozelle Devendorf was a member of an old Holland Dutch family, among the first settlers in the Mohawk Valley.

His great-grandfathers on both sides served in the Revolutionary War.

Born on Nov. 2, 1856, he was reared on a farm in Danube. He received his early education in the district school at Danube and later attended Little Falls Academy, from which he was graduated with honors in 1876.

Mr. Devendorf then entered the law offices of Smith & Murray at Herkimer, in October, 1877.

Admitted to Bar in 1880

He studied law with that firm and later with Josiah A. Steele and in October, 1880 was admitted to the bar.

After being admitted, Mr. Devendorf was for one year employed as clerk in the law firm then composed of George W. Smith and Josiah A. Steele. At the end of the year he formed a co-partnership with the late Adam J. Smith, under the name of Devendorf & Smith, and the firm continued actively in practice until the election of Mr. Devendorf to the office of district attorney of Herkimer County in 1888.

He was re-elected prosecutor in 1891 on the Republican ticket and continued in that position until 1895 when he was elected as county judge and surrogate.

In 1905 Judge Devendorf was elected supreme court justice and re-elected in 1919.

He continued service on the bench until Jan. 1, 1927, when he was compelled to retire, having reached the age limit of 70 years.

Given Testimonial

Upon the occasion of his retirement from the bench Justice Devendorf was the guest of honor at a testimonial dinner in this city which was one of the largest events of its kind ever held here. He was then named official referee of the Supreme Court.

During his long career as a judge, he had presided over many cases of major importance and established an enviable reputation throughout the Fifth Judicial District for his ability as a lawyer, and the fair and impartial manner in which he conducted court.

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Recently he was elected honorary president of Mohawk Towns Association.

In 1906 he presided at the first degree murder trial of Chester Gillette, charged with the murder of Miss Grace Brown, in Big Moose Lake. Gillette was convicted and electrocuted at Auburn Prison.

Justice Devendorf also presided at the trial of Jean Gianini, Herkimer County school boy charged with the murder of Lida Lou Beecher at Poland. Gianini was acquitted on grounds of imbecility.

Judge Devendorf also presided at the trial of Jennie Werner, accused of the murder of her husband Henry Werner in Ilion in 1921. Mrs. Werner was declared not guilty.

Since retirement from the Supreme Court, Justice Devendorf had served as an official referee of Supreme Court and until a short time ago was actively engaged in reference work.

Although virtually all his life had been spent in Herkimer County, Justice Devendorf was known throughout the state by reason of his work as a judge, and members of the bar, regardless of party affiliations, commended him for his service.

During the World War, Justice Devendorf was active in promoting Liberty Loan drives, and in working for the American Red Cross.

He took more than ordinary interest in historical matters and long retained membership in the Herkimer County and New York State Historical Societies.

### Had Many Affiliations

Long a member of the Masonic Order, he was affiliated with Herkimer Lodge 423, F. & A.M.; Iroquois Chapter 236, R.A.M.; Little Falls Commandery, [?] K. P.; Central Citica Bodies, A. & A. S. R.; and Zicara Temple A.A.O.N.M.S. of Utica. He was also a member of the Little Falls Lodge of Elks, Port Dayton Grange, Herkimer; Down and Out Club, Herkimer; the Little Falls Country Club; the Fort Schuyler Club and the Republican Club, Utica; the National Republican Club, New York City; and the Black River Valley Club of Watertown.

His favorite sports were fishing, hunting and golf.

He had been a member of the Universalist Church at Herkimer for many years and always displayed an active interest in its affairs.

At Herkimer, Oct. 11, 1882, he married Miss Margaret Bellinger of that place. They had two children, Dr. Frederick C. Devendorf of New York City, and Mrs. Margaret Porter, wife of George L. Porter of Herkimer, who survives, with a brother, Stuart L., of Baldwinsville.

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