

## [Hosmer, James Jackson]

### District Attorney Hosmer Succumbs to Sudden Illness

#### ***Prison Riot Prosecutor Fails to Survive Despite Operation to Save Life***

James Jackson Hosmer, district attorney for Cayuga County since January 1 last, died shortly after the stroke of midnight last night at the City Hospital. In spite of the heroic efforts of a corps of surgeons, physicians and nurses, Mr. Hosmer did not have the vitality to combat peritonitis which set in from a ruptured ulcer in the back part of his stomach. An operation to save his life at the hospital yesterday proved futile.

The news of the death of "Jimmy" Hosmer, starting his career as district attorney of Cayuga County January 1 last and giving promise of a brilliant record in that office, stunned his legion of friends and acquaintances as well as citizens of Auburn generally this morning.

He was born in the Town of Aurelius and was educated in the schools of Auburn. He was graduated from the High School in the class of 1902 and attended Hamilton College for two years when he decided to study law and entered the offices of Dayton & Clark. At that time Harry F. Dayton, senior member of the firm, was district attorney. Hosmer was admitted to the bar of Cayuga County in 1909 and then entered the offices of Robert J. Burritt, then district attorney. When Bean Kenyon was elected district attorney 12 years ago, Mr. Hosmer was named his assistant and served with Mr. Kenyon through his dozen years in that office.

In his High School days Mr. Hosmer was prominent in athletics. During his four years he was chosen to captain football, baseball and track teams. He continued his athletic prowess during his two years in Hamilton College. While assistant to District Attorney Kenyon he continued his practice of law with success. Several years ago he entered into partnership with Nelson L. Drummond under the firm name of Drummond & Hosmer which continued up to the time of his election as district attorney.

His many years of association with Auburn attorneys in the office of district attorney grounded him well in criminal law and his experience was valuable when he took over the reins of that office.

"Jimmy" Hosmer faced the toughest schedule of any district attorney for Cayuga County when he started work last January. He was faced with the trial of six Auburn prison convicts for the murder of their pal, Henry Sullivan, during the big riot of December 11 at the prison. He conducted that trial with the result that three were convicted and sentenced to the electric chair and three were acquitted. Then came the trial of Max Becker for the murder of George A. Durnford, during the December 11 riot in which Becker was freed after a several weeks' trial. Then Antonio Mortelito was tried for the murder of Principal Keeper Edward B. Beckwith at the prison mess hall March 5, in which Mortelito was convicted and sentenced to death. In addition to these major cases he tried a number of lesser criminal cases as well as appearing before the January Grand Jury in the probe of the affairs and management of Auburn Prison, a task still unfinished.

Day and night Mr. Hosmer worked with his assistants last January. When the work of trials or preparation was the thickest he had his meals brought in from the outside to his offices and his apparently endless assignment to criminal cases went forward with speed and thoroughness.

Monday of this week District Attorney Hosmer presented four cases to the Grand Jury and the indictments were presented in court late in the afternoon. When Mr. Hosmer retired to his offices on the ground floor of the Court House after a big day's work, he collapsed. He complained of pains in his stomach and was taken to his home in Lake Avenue. His condition during the night did not improve.

Tuesday morning his removal to the City Hospital for an immediate operation was directed by surgeons in charge. The operation revealed the ruptured ulcer with peritonitis setting in. Every effort known to medicine and surgical science was exerted to save his life. The grim reaper won the victory—

[Hosmer, James Jackson]

"Jimmy" Hosmer went down the western slope of life and crossed the great divide, shortly after midnight.

James Jackson Hosmer was a quiet, unassuming lad, youth, and man. He had the great faculty of making friends and keeping them. By his tenaciousness he climbed up the ladder of the legal profession and at the time of his death had a substantial practice in addition to his duties as district attorney.

He always kept up his interest and enthusiasm for athletics and in recent years had been a devotee of golf as a member of the Highland Park Golf Club.

Surviving are his widow, Georgia R Coates Hosmer; a son, Howard Hosmer; a sister, Miss Jane F. Hosmer of New York; five brothers, Robert W. and Charles F. Hosmer of Detroit, Frederick M. Hosmer of Auburn, F. Howard Hosmer of Syracuse, Wilson G. Hosmer of New York.

Funeral services will be held at 3 o'clock Friday afternoon from the First Universalist Church. Rev. Plato T. Jones, pastor, will officiate. Burial will be in Fort Hill Cemetery. Friends may call at the Hosmer home, Thursday afternoon and evening, corner of Lake Avenue and Swift Street.

Grand Jury Tribute.

The January Grand Jury before which Mr. Hosmer has for weeks presented evidence in criminal matters, met today and passed resolutions of tribute. The jury then adjourned until 10 o'clock Monday morning. It will meet unofficially at 2:30 o'clock Friday to attend the funeral of Mr. Hosmer.

The tribute adopted today follows:

"Whereas, this Grand Jury summoned with the January term of the Supreme Court has this morning learned with deep regret of the untimely death of its beloved District Attorney James Jackson Hosmer,

"Resolved, that this Grand Jury adopt the following minute on the death of our friend and counsellor:

"James J. Hosmer was a courteous gentleman of loveable disposition and possessing a deep fund of sympathy for the downtrodden and oppressed. He was a faithful public servant of many years experience, ever zealous in looking after the common weal. He was a wise counselor, deliberate, careful and discriminating between things to be rightfully achieved and things undesirable. He was a true friend of every member of this Grand Jury; further,

"Resolved, that in token of our respect we inscribe in our minutes a copy of these resolutions, send a copy to the family and have the same published in the newspapers of the city.

Fred L. Hallett, Foreman,  
J. Max Coapman, Assistant Foreman,  
Jeremiah Fitzgerald, Clerk."

*Auburn Citizen*, Auburn NY, Wed. 4 Jun 1930

Transcribed on 4 Apr 2012 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY