

## *Iowa People and Events . . .*

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### Iowa Law Firm in Business 120 Years

The present law firm of O'Connor, Thomas, McDermott & Wright was originally founded in 1840 when Iowa was a territory, six years before it became a state. James Crawford, a native of Vermont, and Timothy Davis from New Jersey came to Dubuque in 1838 and 1840 respectively, and formed a law partnership known as Davis and Crawford. Mr. Davis was a member of the bar of Kentucky, where he had practiced for a short time, and of Missouri where he had been an active member of the legal profession for some 20 years. He was a Whig candidate for Congress in the Second Iowa District in 1848, but the Democratic candidate, Shepherd Leffler, was elected; however, he was successful in 1856, defeating Leffler. Mr. Davis served one term in Congress. Frederick E. Bissell, who had studied law in the office of Davis and Crawford, was admitted to the bar of Iowa in 1846 and continued in the employment of the firm. Mr. Crawford died that year and the partnership became Davis and Bissell.

Upon the withdrawal of Mr. Davis from the firm in 1852, it became known as Clark and Bissell, Mr. Lincoln Clark having come to Dubuque in the late 1840's from Alabama where he had served three terms in the house of the Alabama legislature. He was elected attorney general of Alabama in 1839, and subsequently served as a judge in that state. Mr. Clark, the Democratic candidate, was elected to Congress from the Second Iowa District in 1850. He served in the house of the 7th General Assembly of the State of Iowa, and took a predominant part in adapting the laws of the state to the new constitution which had just been adopted. Mr. Clark retired in 1855, and Mr. Bissell formed a partnership with William Mills. The firm became Bissell, Mills & Shiras when O. P. Shiras became a partner in 1856. Mr. Mills left

the firm in 1861 and it became Bissell & Shiras. Oliver P. Shiras served as an aide to President Lincoln from August 1862 to December 1863. John M. Ballou, a nephew of Mr. Bissell, joined the firm in 1866, making it Bissell, Shiras & Ballou. Mr. Bissell served as attorney general of the State of Iowa from the early part of 1866 until his death in June 1867.

Mr. Shiras soon formed a partnership with Alonzo J. VanDuzee under the name of Shiras and VanDuzee. Mr. David B. Henderson was admitted to the firm in 1869, changing it to Shiras, VanDuzee & Henderson. Mr. Henderson as the result of wounds received while serving with the Union army during the Civil War, walked with a wooden leg. He studied law with Bissell & Shiras after the war, was Collector of Internal Revenues for the northern district of Iowa from 1865 to 1869, and served two years as assistant United States district attorney for the district. Mr. Shiras was a brother of George Shiras, Jr., an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1892 to 1903. Iowa was divided into two federal judicial districts in 1882, and Oliver Perry Shiras became the first judge of the northern district of Iowa, serving in said capacity from 1882 until 1903. Judge Shiras appointed his former law partner, Mr. VanDuzee, clerk of his court, a position which Mr. VanDuzee held until his death in 1912.

Mr. Henderson conducting the firm by himself in 1882, took in under the name of Henderson, Hurd & Daniels, Louis G. Hurd and Frank B. Daniels, who had practiced together from 1876 to 1882. Mr. Henderson was elected a representative to the Forty-eighth Congress in 1882, was re-elected nine times, and served as Speaker of the House for two terms, 1899 to 1903. George W. Miesel joined the firm in 1887, at which time it became Henderson, Hurd, Daniels & Miesel.

Mr. Daniels moved to Chicago in November 1895, entering the legal department of the Pullman Palace Car Company, and later becoming general counsel for that corporation. Daniel J. Lenahan, who had served as an Iowa district court judge in the Tenth judicial district

from 1887 to 1891, became a partner in the firm the following year, replacing Mr. Daniels. Colonel Henderson retired in 1903, and the partnership became Hurd, Lenehan & Miesel.

Mr. Miesel retired in 1918, at which time William Avery Smith and Frank A. O'Connor, who had practiced together at New Hampton, Iowa since 1898, moved to Dubuque to join the firm, making it Hurd, Lenehan, Smith & O'Connor. Frank A. O'Connor had served as county attorney of Chickasaw county from 1902 to 1906, was state representative from that county from 1909 to 1913, and United States attorney for the northern district of Iowa from July 21, 1914, until November 15, 1921. The firm became Smith & O'Connor with the retirement of Judge Lenehan in 1925 and the death of Mr. Hurd in 1929. Mr. O'Connor was general counsel for the Federal Land Bank of Omaha in 1934 and was also appointed general agent for the Farm Credit Administration at Omaha, Nebraska the same year, serving in that position until 1937. Charles E. O'Connor, son of Frank A. O'Connor, was associated with the firm from 1931 to 1937, leaving to enter federal government service as a lawyer with the Federal Trade Commission. He is now practicing law in Frankfurt, Germany, as a partner in the firm of O'Hare, O'Connor & Jones.

E. Marshall Thomas became a partner in December 1934, and Paul F. Smith joined the firm in 1936. His father, William Avery Smith, president of the Iowa State Bar Association, 1941-42, was elected a justice of the Iowa Supreme Court for the term commencing in January 1943, and served until his death June 10, 1958. Francis J. O'Connor, the son of Frank A. O'Connor, joined the firm in 1940. The elder O'Connor died June 21, 1954.

James F. Ryan, who had been an associate from 1926 to 1932, rejoined the firm in July 1944 while Mr. Thomas was serving in the Army Air Corps, 1944-45, and then returned to the chief counsel's office of the Bureau of Internal Revenue at the end of 1945.

Paul F. Smith accepted a legal position with the Veterans Administration's regional office in Minneapolis, Min-

nesota, and Edward D. Wright and Edward A. McDermott, who became associated with the firm in July 1946 and February 1947 respectively, were admitted as partners in 1953. The firm now consists of E. Marshall Thomas, Francis J. O'Connor, Edward A. McDermott, Edward D. Wright and associates, Edward D. Fadler and David L. Hammer.

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### Local Civil War Centennial Committees

The Iowa Civil War Centennial Commission has adopted as its first major objective the organization of local centennial committees throughout the state. It hopes that such a committee will be formed in every county to plan and direct local commemorative activities during the next four years. The state commission is currently preparing plans to encourage and assist interested individuals and groups to take the lead in this project. County historical societies, patriotic groups, service clubs, and other local organizations are invited to write or visit the Iowa Civil War Centennial Commission headquarters, State Historical Building, Des Moines 19, Iowa.

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### Junior Lincoln Historians

A governor's citation for the winning entry in an All-Iowa essay contest on "Lincoln Lives" was presented to Diane Bennett, ninth grade Winterset student, in ceremonies at the State House on Gettysburg Day, November 19, 1959. The Friends of Lincoln, sesquicentennial committee appointed by the governor, made the awards, with runner-up honors going to Douglas Nelson, grade 10, of Jewell, Iowa. Miss Bennett's essay reads as follows:

We, as a country, as a group, as individuals, lost many years ago, one of the greatest men bestowed upon us. Even though this great man is physically dead, somehow we know that—he still lives.

Yes, I say this man still lives. He lives through his

sayings, his decisions, his speeches, his stories, but most of all through his wisdom. The world when weary, dark and gray, has but to think back, to remember and to say, "What would this wise man have done, if he had been in this position?" He bends low and whispers faith in the ear of the down-hearted, the forsaken, the weary, and the unhappy. He lends his strength, his tact, his iron will to those who need his everlasting wisdom.

He walks among us, wise and true. His life has set a great example for us and our posterity. The world to come will look back and marvel in the glory of this great man. We may not see him, but The Great Emancipator is by our side, guiding us over the crooked road of life. So let freedom's fiery bell of liberty peal out, for—Abraham Lincoln lives on and on.

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### A Memory

The following poem by Sam B. Matson of Mediapolis, Iowa was penned at the death of James Elting, former commander and last survivor of #157 Sheppard Post of the Grand Army of the Republic in Mediapolis December 17, 1926. It marked the end of this local organization of veterans of the Civil War, which for many years exerted a powerful influence on community affairs. The members slipped away one by one until they became only a memory. With the centennial of that tragic conflict in the immediate future, may the present and future generations prove as loyal and courageous.

They fought their fight, these men  
Of sixty-one,  
And finished well the task  
They had begun.  
With noble courage marched  
And never faltered,  
To save their land and flag  
From being altered.  
Thru storm and calm, in hardship  
And privation,  
They struggled for their Country's  
Preservation.



They fought in mountain,  
Plain and wilderness,  
Nor paused to think of aught  
Except success.  
They faltered not when comrades  
By them fell,  
Torn and mangled by rain  
Of shot and shell;  
But onward pressed, determined  
They would stay  
'Til lines of blue were merged  
With lines of grey.

Their task was finished;  
Their victory won;  
Their faces turned toward home  
And setting sun;  
Their Country saved;  
An alien people freed.  
What mattered it that some  
Were forced to bleed  
And die, for cause of Freedom  
And for Right,  
When daylight's sun dispelled  
The clouds of night?

Home, family, Freedom,  
Their nation saved,  
These heroes settled down  
At home and slaved  
That we, their children  
Might some day possess  
A great unmeasured meed  
of happiness.  
That we might soon the world's  
Great leader be,  
A nation pledged to serve  
Humanity.

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