



AMBROSE B. REID

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AMBROSE B. REID — A MEMORIAL

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AMBROSE B. REID was born in Clarion, Clarion County, Pennsylvania, on February 3, 1857. His father was Major Bernard J. Reid and his mother was Letitia (Farran) Reid. Bernard J. Reid was born at Youngstown, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, on April 23, 1823. He was a son of an early school teacher and surveyor, Meredith Reid, and Eleanor (Hanlon) Reid. Letitia Farran was the daughter of John Farran, a merchant of Pittsburgh. When he was seventeen years of age Bernard J. Reid walked from Youngstown to Pittsburgh and procured employment in a Market Street drygoods store. Later he became a teacher at the Dunlevy School, Chartiers Township, Allegheny County, and also taught a term at a select school held at the old Niagara Engine House in Pittsburgh. In 1843 Bernard J. Reid founded and became the editor of the *Iron County Democrat* of Clarion. He joined the gold rush to California in 1849, crossing the plains in a wagon train, the journey consuming one hundred and twenty days. He became a professor of English at Santa Clara College, San Jose, California, in 1851. He enlisted as a soldier in the Union Army in the Civil War and became captain of Company F of the famous Sixty-third Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers commanded by General Alexander Hays of Pittsburgh. He took part in McClellan's Peninsula Campaign and ended his military career with the title of Major.

Ambrose B. Reid spent part of his boyhood in Titusville and Erie, Pennsylvania, during the years from 1865 to 1877, in which period his father was active as one of the leading attorneys of northwestern Pennsylvania, engaged in oil litigation. About that time the Reid family returned to Clarion where Ambrose B. Reid made his home until he came to Pittsburgh to practice law. He received his early education in the public and parochial schools of Clarion County and then entered the University of Notre Dame. In 1875 he registered as a law student in the offices of his father in Clarion and was admitted to the bar of that county on February 3, 1878. He practiced law with his father in Clarion as a member of the firm of B. J. and A. B. Reid from his admission to the bar at the age of twenty-one until his removal to Pittsburgh in February, 1890, when he was admitted to the bar of Allegheny County, and became a partner of the late A. V. D. Watterson, with whom he continued to practice law under the firm name of Watterson and Reid until he became a judge of the court of common pleas of Allegheny County on the first Monday of January, 1912.

Ambrose B. Reid was a very highly respected member of the Allegheny County bar. He and Mr. Watterson had a large practice and were esteemed as among the most reputable members of the local legal profession.

Judge Reid was a Jeffersonian Democrat by inheritance and tradition and adhered to the Democratic party during his lifetime. In 1911 he became a candidate for the office of judge of the court of common pleas. He was nominated for that office by the Democratic party, and also by the Keystone party, an independent political organization which had had some success in then recent elections. At that period the Republican party in Pennsylvania and also in Allegheny County was the predominant party. The Democratic party of Allegheny County had a very meager following among the people and a Republican nomination was generally equivalent to election.

A well-known attorney secured the Republican nomination for judge of the court of common pleas, and it appeared almost a certainty that he would be elected. It was well known among the lawyers that the Republican candidate against Judge Reid was a vulnerable man, but until

a week before the election in November there appeared to be no way to defeat him.

A few days before the election the Voters' League of Allegheny County published its report of the various candidates before the people at that election, and in this report it included a statement about the unprofessional conduct of the Republican candidate for the common pleas court in connection with a case in which he appeared as attorney for a woman, from whom, according to a record in the court of common pleas, he had been guilty of misappropriating a large sum of money. The publication of this statement of unprofessional conduct caused a sensation in Allegheny County and was widely publicized by a committee of lawyers and public-spirited laymen. In the course of the week-end before the general election the sentiment of the voters of Allegheny County was turned against the Republican candidate and in favor of Ambrose B. Reid, who was elected judge of the court of common pleas in what seemed to be a miraculous reversal of public opinion.

This was a great triumph for the integrity of our courts, in which the bar of Allegheny County took a prominent part. Their faith in Judge Reid was justified by every action of his on the bench of our common pleas court, where he served (being re-elected twice by the voters of all parties) until his death on Saturday, November 29, 1941. Judge Reid had been unable to officiate in court for several years on account of sickness. His third term would have expired on the first Monday of January, 1942.

Judge Reid became president judge of the court on December 20, 1933, being the fifth to hold that office after the consolidation of the four common pleas courts of the county in January, 1912. He thus became one of a group of distinguished president judges of this court, the first of whom was Judge Robert S. Frazer, who later became a justice and chief justice of the supreme court of Pennsylvania. Judge Frazer was successively followed in the president-judgeship by Judge John D. Shafer, a most distinguished and cultured judge; Judge John A. Evans, noted for his aggressiveness and great ability as a trial judge; and Judge James R. MacFarlane, an eminent judge under whom the administration of the court reached a high state of efficiency.

Judge Reid not only served the public well as a lawyer and judge but he took an active interest in civic affairs, in many philanthropic agencies of the community, and in the activities of the Roman Catholic Church of which he was a devoted member. He was a generous contributor to all worth-while community enterprises. He was an active and enthusiastic member, trustee, and vice president of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. He was an active member of Davis Star Camp, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. He was one of the first instructors in the Duquesne University Law School and received the honorary degree of doctor of laws from Duquesne University, Mount St. Mary's College, and the University of Notre Dame. He was an organizer and treasurer of the Conference of Catholic Charities and served as a member of the board of directors of that association. He was also a member of the board of directors of St. Joseph's Protectory; a director and vice president of Calvary Cemetery; an incorporator of St. Mary's Cemetery; a member of the board of St. Michael's Cemetery; a member of the Holy Name Society; chairman of St. Paul's Cathedral church committee; an advisory member of the board of the Central Catholic High School and Duquesne University; a director of the St. Vincent De Paul Society; and a charter member and past grand knight of the Duquesne Council, Knights of Columbus. He was also active in the Lawyer's Retreat Movement of St. Paul's Monastery.

Judge Reid's family has been closely identified with the Catholic Church in western Pennsylvania for more than a century. His grand uncle, the Reverend James Reid, was ordained in 1831. His aunt, Margaret Farran, was one of the first native-born Pittsburghers to enter a religious order. She was a member of the Sisters of Charity for more than fifty years and died at St. Joseph's, Emmitsburg, Maryland. An uncle of Judge Reid, the Reverend John C. Farran, celebrated his golden jubilee shortly before his death as rector of St. Columba, Johnstown. A brother, the Reverend George J. Reid, deceased, was rector of St. Joseph's Church, Clarksville, Texas. Two of Judge Reid's sisters became members of the Mercy Order, Sister Alphonso, deceased, and Sister Mary Agnes of Titusville who died January 2, 1942.

In 1896 Judge Reid was married to Lucy S. Hopkins, now deceased. At the time of his death Judge Reid resided at 1021 Devonshire

Road, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and left to survive him his sister, Sister Mary Agnes; two sons, B. Meredith Reid, a well-known member of the bar of Allegheny County, and Alfred D. Reid who is an architect; and seven grandchildren, Camilla Lou, Ambrose B., II, Katherine Mary, Alfred D., Jr., Thomas Frederick, Patricia Ann, and Lucy Hopkins Reid.

Judge Reid was highly esteemed for his conscientious devotion to duty, for his fairness, patience, and courtesy as a judge, for the soundness of his judgment, and above all for the unimpeachable integrity of his character. He was an earnest christian gentleman who carried his religious convictions into his work, the purity of which was symbolized by the fact that on his desk, in a small oval frame, there was displayed, without ostentation, a picture of Christ. No mention was ever made of the presence of this picture, but there it stood, a true expression of the character of the judge in whose chambers it was displayed.

Judge Reid's record as a lawyer and judge can be found in the records of the court of common pleas of Allegheny County, in volumes of the *Pittsburgh Legal Journal* and of the reports of the superior and supreme courts of Pennsylvania published during the period of his career as a lawyer and judge in Allegheny County.

The records reveal the honorable and efficient service of a faithful son, husband, father, citizen, lawyer, and judge, who at the last great day will hear from the Judge of all the earth the judgment, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord."