

PROCEEDINGS  
IN MEMORY OF  
CHIEF JUSTICE RIPLEY.

The Honorable Christopher Gore Ripley was born September 6, 1822, in Waltham, Massachusetts, where his father, Rev. Samuel Ripley, was the settled "Unitarian minister. His mother, who is said to have been one of the most remarkable women of the century in her intellectual attainments, was the daughter of Captain Gamaliel Bradford of Boston. The future chief justice was prepared for college by his parents, and graduated from Harvard College in 1841. He spent one year at the Harvard Law School, and then entered the office of Franklin Dexter, Esq., of Boston, a celebrated lawyer of that day. In 1855 he came to the then territory of Minnesota, settling first at Brownsville but removing to Chatfield in 1856, where he practiced his profession.

In 1869 he was elected Chief Justice of this court for the constitutional term beginning in January, 1870, but in April, 1874, he was compelled by failing health to resign. The remainder of his life was spent at Concord, Massachusetts, where in the "Old Manse" he died October 15, 1881.

The opinions of Judge Ripley begin in Volume 15 and end in Volume 20 of the *Minnesota Reports*.

On Wednesday morning, November 30, 1881, in behalf of the bar of Fillmore county, the Attorney General, Hon. William J. Hahn, presented to the Supreme Court the following report of proceedings had in the district Court of that county with reference to the death of Chief Justice Ripley:

At the general November Term of court begun and holden at the court house in the Village of Preston, County of Fillmore, State of Minnesota, on the 9th day of November, A. D. 1881. John. Q. Farmer, district judge, presiding.

At the opening of the court H. R. Wells, Esq., suggested the decease of Hon. Christopher G. Ripley, late Chief Justice of this state, and that such action be taken as will show the high esteem in which the deceased was held by the court and the members of this bar. Whereupon, the court appointed H. R. Wells, N. P. Colburn and J. S. Jones, a committee to draft appropriate resolutions of respect. After fitting remarks by the members of the bar and court, the committee reported as follows:

"To the Honorable the District Court of Fillmore County, in General Term.

"Your committee respectfully report:

"Whereas, the Honorable Christopher Gore Ripley, an honored member of our bar from 1856 until he was called to the responsibilities of Chief Justice of this state, in 1870, departed this life at his residence in Concord, Massachusetts, on the 15th day of October, 1881, as a tribute of our respect for his memory and in appreciation of his worth, we present the following:

"First. That from long and intimate association with the deceased we bear sincere and

earnest testimony to his fidelity to every trust. He was a genial associate and a true friend, obedient to every requirement of society, cheerfully acceding to its calls and anticipating its demands. He loved truth and hated oppression. As an attorney he endeavored to protect the weak and to promote justice. As a judge he illustrated the qualities of mind and heart essential to and exalting, his high office.

"Second. Sharing his confidence and regard, his friendship has endowed us with pleasant memories, but his loss fills our hearts with sorrow.

"Third. That these proceedings be engrossed and made a part of the records of this court.

"That authenticated copies thereof be forwarded to the Attorney General of this state, to be by him brought to the attention of the Honorable Supreme Court, also to the widow and family of the deceased at her residence in Concord.

H. R. Wells,  
"N. P. Colburn,  
"J. E. Jones,  
"Committee."  
November, 1881.

Ordered: That the proceedings be engrossed and made a part of the court records.

JOHN Q. FARMER, Judge District Court.

Thereupon in behalf of this court ASSOCIATE JUSTICE BERRY responded as follows:

"The proceedings of the bar of Fillmore county which have just been presented as a tribute to the memory of Chief Justice Ripley are the more significant, because they are the testimony to his learning and worth of those whose opportunities for knowing him were of the best—the testimony of his professional brethren among whom he was engaged in the practice of the law for more than fifteen years, and among whom he resided during the four years of his judicial service. They doubtless express not only the sentiments of the bar, but the general regard and esteem in which he was held by the entire community in which he dwelt, as a learned and skillful lawyer, a wise counselor and an honorable, courteous and upright man.

"Coming into southeastern Minnesota in the infancy of its settlement, he was brought by professional and other business relations in contact with a large proportion of the early settlers, so that there was hardly a man among them of any, even local, prominence who did not know him.

"In a new settlement, into which every man comes almost as a stranger, there is, as many of us can bear witness from personal observation, a prevailing feeling of mutual dependence and a sense of obligation for kind offices which, to a considerable extent, disappear as the country grows older and people are more able to depend upon themselves. But, for the years during which it lasts, this feeling of dependence brings men very closely together and affords them unusual opportunities for forming estimates of character and ability which are seldom mistaken, and the resulting likes and dislikes are ordinarily well-founded and lasting. This is well exemplified in the case of Judge Ripley. No man in that part of the state made more, warmer, or firmer friends, especially among the early settlers, than he did by his cheerful readiness to do a public service or a private kindness, and by his entire reliability in every matter of business or duty.

"My own personal acquaintance with Judge Ripley substantially began when he became a member of this court. After that time we were brought together almost constantly during the terms of court, and at the meetings held in vacation for consultation. He was a most delightful companion, not only on account of the extent, variety and accuracy of his information, his knowledge of men and affairs, his large fund of anecdote, his fresh, genial and abounding wit and humor, but equally on account of his unfailing courtesy, his unaffected modesty and his genuine kindness of heart.

"He was well descended, and his advantages in youth and early manhood were uncommonly great. His father was a Unitarian minister of high repute in the days of Channing, and his mother the most learned woman of her time. He was born and reared at a period of great intellectual activity in New England, when questions of high import, theological, literary and scientific, were familiarly discussed at the fireside. A critical observer and an incessant and thoughtful reader, he failed not to profit by his opportunities.

"As one marked result his familiar and unstudied conversation, aided by a ready and retentive memory, was instructive and entertaining to a degree which those whose privilege it was to enjoy it can never forget.

"As a judge he was animated with the highest sense of the sacredness of the judicial function, and with an ardent desire so to administer the law as to do equal justice between man and man. He brought to the discharge of his official duties much learning and all the application by study and thought of which he was capable. No man ever questioned the purity of his intentions or his unspotted integrity of purpose. To his associates upon the bench he ever manifested, both in public and private, the same unassuming modesty and considerate kindness and courtesy which always characterized his relations to the bar.

"I speak for my brother McMillan, as well as myself, in saying that we look back upon our association with Judge Ripley upon the bench of this court with the most gratifying recollections.

"To this inadequate tribute to the memory of a good man it only remains for me to add that, after his impaired health compelled him to resign his judicial office, he returned to Concord, Massachusetts. There he died on the 15th day of October last, at the age of 59, among the friends of his youth, having received during a long and patiently-endured illness of seven years the devoted care of his most estimable wife, of his surviving sisters, and of other near and affectionate relatives."

Whereupon it is ordered that said report of the proceedings had in the District Court of Fillmore County, together with the response thereto, be entered at length upon the records of this court