

# Cyrus A. Leland

**1843-1926**

Cyrus Austin Leland was born on August 11, 1843 in Ottawa, La Salle County, Illinois. His parents were the Hon. Lorenzo and Margaret Harrington (Holbrook) Leland. The Leland family traced its founding in America from the early settlement of the Massachusetts colony.

Educated in the public schools of Ottawa, Leland then attended Williston Seminary on East Hampton, Mass., followed by Yale University. He graduated from Yale in 1865 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Preparing for law in his father's office in Ottawa, he was admitted to the bar in 1867. He continued to practice law in Ottawa from 1867-1877, when he moved to El Dorado, Kansas.

In 1870, Leland married Nellie A. Thompson, the daughter of his father's third wife. Five children were born to this marriage. One daughter died in childhood.

Daughters Flora and Cecil were well-known in art circles; for years they maintained a watercolor studio in Kansas City, MO. Cecil had graduated in the literary department of Kansas University; Flora had studied art at the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as studying painting in Europe.

Leland's son, Cyrus A. Leland, Jr. graduated from the electrical engineering department of the University of Kansas in 1910. He went on to become superintendent of the electrical department of the Atchison Railway, Light and Power Co. in Atchison, KS.

Son Percy, after graduating from the University of Kansas, practiced as an attorney before his death in Feb. 1919.

The Leland's made their home in El Dorado at 215 South Washington. Their home was known as a joyful, hospitable place, with one of the most complete private libraries of the state at that time.

Mr. Leland was a friendly and charming man, known for good will shining from twinkling black eyes, with a warm handshake. If he thought he had made an enemy, he did his best to win back the friendship of the person thought to be offended. He had a well-marked dignity about him. Possessing a student's well-trained mind, his education did not cease at Yale but continued throughout his life. He was still alert to new ideas into his eighties.

The acknowledged chess champion of El Dorado, he also enjoyed sports and athletics. Many summers included trips to Chicago to witness games in the major baseball leagues. He was a great lover of the outdoors, enjoying the tennis court or a close game of golf to an immeasurable extent.

Leland died of heart disease on October 16, 1926, at the age 83. At the time of his death, he was one of the oldest active attorneys in Kansas.

A charter member of the Kansas State Bar Association, Leland was also director and attorney for the Farmers and Merchants National Bank of El Dorado. He was a member of the El Dorado Kiwanis Club, taking great pleasure in attending its meetings, and a member of the Sterry Hunting & Fishing Club based near Creed, Colorado.

#### CONNECTION TO BUTLER COUNTY

One of Butler County's most prominent lawyers of the day, Cyrus Leland also served for a time as city attorney. He was elected to the Thirteenth Judicial District in 1888 and served on the bench through 1891.

In addition to his law practice and an interest in the Farmers and Merchants Bank, Leland acquired a considerable amount of property in El Dorado. He owned several buildings housing local businesses.

Leland had followed in his father's footsteps in pursuing a law degree. After having been a teacher, Lorenzo Leland studied law, associating himself with a cousin in Illinois. He had also served as appointed clerk of Illinois' Supreme Court, as well as the office of county treasurer.

#### COMING TO THE AREA

When Leland came to El Dorado in 1877, he and brother Lorenzo Leland, Jr. established a law practice under the name of Leland & Leland. Lorenzo returned to Ottawa in 1879; Cyrus remained in El Dorado for the rest of his life.

As most pioneers coming to this region, Leland came to this area in the pursuit of making a prosperous new life for himself and his family.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS

After his brother returned to Ottawa, Illinois, Leland continued to practice law on his own until 1888. At that time he was elected on the Democratic ticket to the office of the Thirteenth Judicial District, where he served on the bench from 1888 to 1891.

In 1873, Leland was appointed as a regent of the Kansas State Agricultural College in Manhattan, Kansas, during Governor George W. Glick's administration. At the state convention of 1882, Leland had been nominated for the position of Congressmen-at-Large but did not receive a majority of votes.

Following his judgeship, Leland formed a law partnership in 1892 with the Hon. C. L. Harris, under the firm name of Leland & Harris. This partnership lasted nearly 18 years before dissolving in December of 1909.

In January 1910, Leland formed a partnership with K. M. Geddes under the name of Leland & Geddes, which became one of the leading law firms of the state of Kansas. Later, R. B. Ralston joined this firm as the junior member, changing its name to Leland, Geddes & Ralston. This firm dissolved on April 1, 1916.

The following year, another partnership was formed with L. J. Bond, with whom Leland remained in association for the rest of his life. For a time, County Attorney R. T. McCluggage was also a member of this firm; he retired to accept election to the position of County Prosecutor.

Cyrus Leland was one of the most active men in the community, even into old age. He served his town well in many helpful ways, moving it towards an upward progress by his example and counsel during times of stress, and by the positive actions of true citizenship.

Every community is said to be a structure made up of bricks or stones; to those who knew his, Leland was considered to be of the cement that holds the sturdy blocks together. Honored among his peers, his "simple, unremembered acts of kindness and of love" set him apart in El Dorado history.

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