

HENRY LAMDIN BENSON

Henry Lamdin Benson was born at Stockton, California, July 6, 1854. He was the son of Rev. Henry Clark Benson and Matilda M. (Williamson) Benson, his wife. Much of his boyhood was spent in Portland during which time his father was editor of the Pacific Christian Advocate. His early education was received in the old Portland Academy, 1864-1868. In 1873 he graduated from the University of the Pacific at San Jose, with the degree of B. A., later receiving degrees of A. M. and L. D. He read law in the offices of George F. Baker of San Francisco and Judge Harrington of San Jose. He was admitted to the bar of the State of California in 1878 and formed a partnership at San Jose with W. G. Lorigan, afterwards a justice of the Supreme Court of California. This partnership continued until 1880 when Judge Benson came to Oregon and became interested in educational work.

After his arrival in Oregon Judge Benson became principal of the Wilbur Academy, a pioneer Methodist School at Wilbur, Oregon (1880-1882), and from 1883 to 1886 he was principal of the normal school at Drain and at a later period, from 1886 to 1890, he was principal of the Grants Pass high school. He was admitted to the bar of Oregon in 1886 and commenced the practice of law in 1891 at Grants Pass.

In 1892, while residing at Grants Pass, Judge Benson was elected District Attorney of the First Judicial District, then composed of Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Lake Counties, and served four years. In 1896 he was chosen member of the House of Representatives from Josephine County, and selected as Speaker of the House in 1897.

In 1898 he was elected Circuit Judge of the First Judicial District and then took up his residence in Klamath Falls. He was re-elected to this office in 1904. In 1908 he resigned and engaged in the practice of his profession in partnership with C. F. Stone at Klamath Falls.

In 1910 Judge Benson was elected Circuit Judge of the Thirteenth Judicial District, composed of Klamath and Lake Counties. In 1914 he was elected Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Oregon and in 1920 he was reelected. He served continuously in this important office from January 4, 1915, to October 16, 1921, when he died.

In 1876 Judge Benson married Susie E. Dougharty who survived him; also three sons and two daughters: Arthur S. Benson, Rea W. Benson and Harry G. Benson, Mrs. N. C. Briggs of Hollister, California, and Mrs. R. H. Robertson of Salem. He is also survived by two brothers, W. W. Benson of Dryad, Washington, and F. T. Benson of San Jose, California, and by three sisters, Mrs. W. T. Perkins of Portland, Mrs. George Carpy of La Grande and Mrs. William Tonkin of San Jose. Judge Benson was a brother of the late Frank W. Benson, formerly Governor of Oregon.

Judge Benson was a Master Mason, a member of the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks and of the Ancient Order of United Workmen. He was a life long republican and a firm believer in the principles of his party.

Judge Benson was one of the most companionable of men. He was welcome everywhere and added to the pleasure of any company in which he found himself. His experience was wide and varied. At his birth the Pacific Coast was a sparsely-settled frontier country. He saw it grow from these small beginnings. He had observed well and he talked interestingly and delightfully on many subjects. He read good books and was a man of scholarly tastes and ripe culture.

The comradeships of life meant a great deal to Judge Benson. He was a warm friend, loyal, genuine and dependable. He was thoughtful of the feelings of others. He never lost an opportunity to pay a compliment or to say that which would put another at his ease. If he entertained an unkind thought of another he never expressed it. He was continuously and deservedly popular. While many times a candidate for office, he was always successful. To an eminent degree he possessed the confidence of the people of this state and he held a warm place in the affections of many of them. As a public servant he was high-minded, conscientious, courageous and patriotic.

He was largely endowed with good common sense. He was a sound reasoner and was loyal to the law. He had an innate love of justice and a hatred of fraud and imposition. His opinions extend through twenty-six volumes of the Oregon Reports, from seventy-four to ninety-nine inclusive. He has rendered an important contribution to the administration of justice in the commonwealth and his well reasoned opinions will permanently point the way to the searcher after justice.

During the World War Judge Benson was unwavering and intense in his devotion to the good cause. He loved his country and gave the best that he had to her service. He had the normal point of view on the public questions of his day. He was free from envy and he had a contempt for the preacher of class hatred.

Judge Benson died at his home in Salem, 945 North Summer Street, on October 16, 1921.