

# LITTLE VISITS TO THE COURTHOUSE

## 1. THE PROBATE JUDGE'S OFFICE

This article was prepared two Weeks ago, before the recent changes in the personnel of the Probate Judge's office. With a few changes it has been brought down to date. The article will doubtless be of all the more interest in view of the prominence of the office in the news at present.

"Ties, 10c.  
"Churn, 50c.  
"Sewing machine, \$10."

One might think he was reading a sale bill for a general store. But this is just an excerpt from one of the many records kept in the Probate Judge's office.

Some folks think that the Probate Judge's office is no more than a place where marriage licenses are sold at two dollars each.

And there are other people who believe the only function of the Probate Judge is to see that wills are properly executed.

Not a few Jackson County boys and girls think the Judge is just a meddling fellow who makes it his business to keep them out of too much mischief.

The truth of it is however, that all these tasks and a dozen others as well come within the duties of Probate Judge John H. Dauber and his deputy, Mrs. Laura Lewis.

Administration of estates is probably the most detailed and most complicated single division of the Probate Judge's activities. Do you know how really complicated this work is? Many items are involved in the settlement of an estate, and the records are kept in many different volumes.

First the will, if there be a will, must be probated. The witnesses to the signing of the will must be brought before the Court for verification of signatures, etc. Then the will must be put on record.

Now an executor must be appointed, if there be a will, and an administrator if no will was made. This individual must give bond, and the bond must be recorded. Notices of the appointment are now published in the newspapers.

An inventory of the estate must be taken. If there be a widow, she has the privilege of taking anything she cares to take at the appraised value. A sale of the remainder of the personal property is then held, and the entire transaction must be recorded, item by item. It was from one of the records of sale that the items at the beginning of this article were taken.

Then comes the matter of inheritance tax. Perhaps you didn't know that if you leave an estate when you die the State steps in and takes a considerable portion, the percentage depending on the size of the estate. Figuring of this tax involves a great amount of detailed work.

Administrators and executors have to report every year, and guardians every two years. These hearings have to be advertised in advance.

Sometimes real estate proceedings must be handled by the Probate Court, but only where the will provides for such.

So much for the matter of estates. Not that we've completely exhausted the subject. Far from it. As the Judge and Mrs. Lewis told us about it, we tried to get all the important points. But there were a lot of things we didn't get. A complete and detailed account of all the entries and activities of the court in the matter of estates would make our story a little too long anyway.

Now and then the Judge is called on to settle a damage suit, or some suit involving the appropriation of property. The last case of the latter type handled was the appropriation of the new right of way at Bierlytown on the Chillicothe Pike.

Even criminal cases of a certain type come under the Court's jurisdiction. Cases of non-support, and assault and battery come before Judge Dauber on certification from the Prosecuting Attorney. One of the newest functions of the Court is the hearing of cases where liquor law violation is charged.

Mothers in Jackson County who are entitled to the Mother's Pension, re-

ceive their checks quarterly from the Probate Judge's office.

The handling of juvenile cases were the special interest of Judge Powell. The Probate Judge has had the function of Juvenile Judge for a comparatively few years. But the duties involved if this work is to be handled correctly require much time.

Judge Powell estimated that in the course of a year 100 youngsters come officially before the Court. About 200 unofficial cases are handled by the Court. Wherever it is at all possible cases are handled unofficially, that the boy or girl may not have a court record to live down in later life.

For instance, a week or so ago, a bunch of youngsters broke a window in a downtown business place. Complaint was made to the Judge, and the youngsters were brought before him. He talked to the boys, with the result that they paid for the window, and the case was dismissed. Not a one of the names went on the Court records.

Judge Powell found homes for more than 130 homeless children. Every case has been investigated thoroughly, and all the children have been placed in good homes in Jackson and adjoining counties, without expense to the County.

Jackson County has an enviable record in the matter of child delinquency. The County has no inmates at Lancaster, and only one at Delaware. For a year and a half there were no inmates in either institution from this county.

Experience indicates that boys show a greater tendency than girls to make good when they are given another chance. Wherever possible delinquents are given a chance to make good in a new environment. Experience has shown that it is difficult for the youth to make good in the same environment. Which goes to show that environment is one of the most important factors in making a child what he is.

The cases of all children brought before the court require thorough investigation of home conditions, as well as of the new homes in which the children are to be placed.

In this part of the work much credit goes to Juvenile Officer, D. E. Howell, who does most of the investigation. Mr. Howell is also attendance officer for the rural schools of the County, which is no small job in itself. Howell is working with children most of the time, and naturally gets to know them pretty well.

The Probate Judge holds hearings in cases of feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, and insanity, committing the individual to one of the state institutions, or appointing a guardian, as he may deem necessary. The average number of such cases is 30 each year, although the number varies considerably.

Not the least important of the functions of the Probate Court is the issuing of marriage licenses. All nurses and physicians in the county must be registered; ministers' licenses must be issued or recorded before the minister may solemnize a marriage in the county. The court formerly kept the birth records of the county, and it is being called on continually for certification of births as well as for certification of marriage licenses. It must be ready to furnish copies of wills, and similar documents recorded by the Probate Court.

Dockets in the office now, date back to 1879. Some of the marriage records go back as far as 1816. Thirteen judges have presided over the Jackson County Probate Court, and the pictures of all of these with the exception of Judge Powell may be seen in the offices of the Court. The first judge was Judge Westfall. Since his term the judges have been, in the order named, T. N. Howell, John Stevenson, George W. Johnson, J. W. Longbon, John J. C. Evans, Hillborn C. Miller, J. W. Laird, R. U. Wilson, C. C. McCormick, Benner Jones, Frank DeLay, Reed M. Powell, and the present Judge, John H. Dauber. The last five of these men are alive, four of them living in this city. Mr. McCormick is in government service at Washington, D. C.

# MRS. E. J. SHELDON PASSES AWAY JULY 9

Former Jackson Resident Dies in  
Illinois Following  
Operation.

Standard-Journal. July 16. 1924

Funeral services were held here Sunday for Mrs. E. J. Sheldon, aged 60 years, who passed away in Streator Ill., last Wednesday noon. Mrs. Sheldon formerly lived in this city, and is the mother of Mrs. Ben Bentley and Howard Sheldon of this city, and George Sheldon of Chillicothe.

Mrs. Sheldon has not been well for some time. She went from her home in Kankakee, Ill., to Streator, to undergo an operation. Her condition was at first favorable, but she became worse, and died in the hospital one week after the operation.

Mr. Sheldon was at one time foreman of the blacksmith shop at the D. T. & I. Shops here. The Sheldons were Jackson residents for 10 years. From this city they went to Streator where they lived for five years. They then moved to Kankakee where they have lived for two years. Mr. Sheldon was superintendent of the Streator Car Works at Kankakee. He and Mrs. Sheldon have visited their old home here nearly every year since they moved to Illinois. Their last visit was last September.

Mrs. Bentley and Howard Sheldon were with their mother at the time of her death. George Sheldon had been there but had returned home only a few days before.

The funeral was held from the Bentley home on West Street Saturday afternoon.

Mrs. Evan Morgan has returned from a visit of several weeks in Columbus.