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# Judge William T. Lafferty, The Citizen

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## JUDGE WILLIAM T. LAFFERTY, THE CITIZEN

In this short sketch the writer will not attempt to deal with the work of Judge William T. Lafferty as Dean of the College of Law in the University of Kentucky, nor with his active career as a practitioner at the Bar in Harrison County, Kentucky, for twenty-eight years before accepting the Deanship of the College of Law, but will endeavor, for the most part, to consider him in the relation of a citizen of Lexington.

He became the first Dean of the College of Law, which was organized in the year 1908, under his direction, and shortly thereafter came to Lexington with his family where, until the date of his death, November 9, 1922, he resided.

It shows the spirit and broad interest of the man, that he did not content himself with performing the duties of his office at the College as Dean, and also as Comptroller, a position he held for several years. These duties to an ordinary man in a new community would of themselves have furnished sufficient demands upon time and energy, but to one who had the broad interest of humanity so heavily laid upon his heart, as did he, it presented additional reason, for giving his time to improving the conditions as they affected the morals and civic life of the community.

The position he held at the college gave him an added interest in the moral life of the community because he desired that the young men and women who came to Lexington to live as students should have the best possible environment while they made their homes here.

In furtherance of this he appealed to the City Government to have moved from the vicinity of the college houses of ill-fame and also the saloons, and to effect this latter purpose he appealed to the General Assembly at Frankfort, and a law was passed that no saloon could exist within a certain distance of the University grounds. He also promoted the organization of the Vice Commission and served as one of its members. Through this organization information was obtained that led to the eradication of places that were undesirable in the neighborhood of the University. Later on he organized and was chairman of the "Committee of One Hundred" which had for its purpose the enforcement of the laws which affected the community as a whole. He was ready and anxious at all times to advise those

who were interested in enforcing the law and he brought to the attention of those in authority many matters of this kind and gave them the benefit of his legal and practical knowledge.

He was particularly fitted for this work, because before becoming a resident of Lexington, he had served one term as County Attorney of Harrison County, two terms as County Judge, and had been also a member of the General Assembly. It is no easy task to be a reformer in any community and especially where one had so recently come to make his home; but he did not shirk the responsibility he felt rested upon him and willingly assumed leadership in this work.

Having been a member of the General Assembly and having such a wide acquaintance with those of influence in the State, he aided very materially in securing legislation for the good of the University in various ways, and particularly in the increased appropriations. He also aided in raising the standard of admission to the bar in order to improve the qualifications of those seeking to become members of that profession.

A consideration of the activities of Judge Lafferty thus discloses his interest in the improvement of conditions, and he was as much interested in this as he was in the mere technical study of the law. He, no doubt, impressed those who came under his influence as students with the idea that their first duty was not simply to be learned in the law, but that knowledge of the law brought responsibility of leadership in the communities in which they might live, to see that it was enforced.

It was highly fitting that he should be connected with the University of Kentucky, because he had been a student there, had served as a member of its Board of Trustees for six years before becoming Dean of the College of Law and had been Chairman of a Committee in the year 1908 composed of members of the Trustees of the University, and of the two State Normal Schools which conducted the campaign that caused the first substantial appropriations to be made to these institutions. He did not, however, confine himself to an interest in the university, for while living in Cynthiana he had been a member of the City School Board and of the Board of Trustees of the College of Bible of Lexington, Kentucky.

In all the varied activities undertaken by Judge Lafferty for the good of this community, the University, and cause of

education throughout the State, the story would be incomplete, if there should be omitted a recognition of the valuable assistance rendered him by his unusually gifted wife. No more active, public spirited woman has lived in our city during the time of their residence here; an able and pleasing speaker, president of the Woman's Club, and member of the State Federation of Women's Clubs, she was ever in the forefront of all these enterprises. Through her researches in the history of our city she was enabled to prepare lectures of great interest, which were delivered by her for the purpose of providing funds for student loans, materially aiding this worthy cause.

It would be but the trite and commonplace to say that the people of Lexington, will greatly miss Judge Lafferty and her, who was his partner in the joint contribution made to our community, she having returned to her former home to reside. He was a Christian gentleman, faithful to the best ideals of Church and State, who has left his impress deeply engraved on the hearts of those who knew him. His character, devotion to duty and untiring energy furnish an example worthy of emulation by the young men and women of the College of Law.

J. NATHAN ELLIOTT.