

JOSEPH DOWNS BARKSDALE

On January 9, 1944, Joseph Downs Barksdale died at his home in Ruston, Lincoln Parish, Louisiana. Thus came to an end one of the outstanding legal careers of our time. Almost 70 years before, Joe Barksdale, as he was lovingly known throughout the State, had been born in the adjoining Parish of Bienville.

During his life's span he became recognized as one of the outstanding lawyers of the State, a loyal and staunch friend, and an uncompromising foe of dishonesty, deceit or decay in government or human relations.

Joe Barksdale loved his family, he loved his friends, he loved his State and Country, and he loved his profession.

There was never a man more solicitous of the welfare of his family and friends.

There was never a leader of this State more kindly and generous in his dealings with his fellowman nor more stern in his demand that those who were entrusted with authority to represent the people should accept such office as a public trust. Any act of a public servant performed for selfish gain or without con-

sideration of the eternal justice and rights of the people met his outspoken condemnation. His every public utterance placed State and Nation above personal interest. He believed and practiced the high principle that the rights of citizenship had, as a corollary, the obligation of each to affirmatively assert and defend the best interests of the government. He well served his State as a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1921.

There was never a lawyer who represented his clients with a more scholarly approach to the problem presented nor with a more dogged determination to protect their interests to the end. His powerful logic and his fighting heart were reflected in every brief he wrote. From the time he was admitted to the bar until his death, he devoted his life to his profession, with the exception of a brief interval during World War I when he organized and managed a wooden ship building company at Moss Point, Mississippi. His humor was reflected in a pamphlet which he wrote entitled "A Country Lawyer in a Wood Ship Yard", dealing with his experiences in this brief digression from the pursuit of his foremost interest, the law.

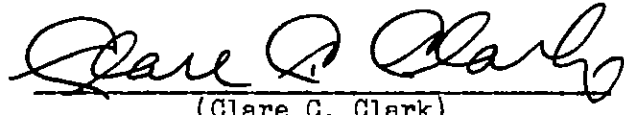
His brothers at the bar honored him during the same year with the presidency of the Shreveport Bar Association and of the Louisiana State Bar Association. These honors he accepted with modesty and gratitude, and he graced the offices with dignity.

His professional career began with his admission to the bar on January 7, 1897. His first partnership was formed in 1900 with his father, Judge Allen Barksdale, at Ruston, under the firm name of Barksdale & Barksdale. A younger brother, Arnold Allen Barksdale, later joined this firm. Upon the death of his father in 1905, Joe Barksdale became the senior member of the firm of Barksdale & Barksdale.

He came to Shreveport in 1922 to become senior member of the firm of Barksdale, Clark & Van Hook but remained until his death the senior member of a Ruston firm bearing his name. In 1924 the firm of Barksdale, Clark & Van Hook became the firm of Barksdale, Bullock, Warren, Clark & Van Hook. This firm was changed to the firm of Barksdale, Bullock, Clark & Van Hook in 1939. His Shreveport firm was dissolved in 1942, and he returned to Ruston to continue the active practice of law with his nephew, Allen Barksdale, under the firm name of Barksdale & Barksdale, the same name as his original firm.


Joe Barksdale was married on November 28, 1900, to Olive Standifer, who died on December 27, 1913. On November 7, 1915, he was married to Rosa Colvin, who survived him, as did an adopted daughter, Elaine Colvin Barksdale.

His life has left an imprint on that moral being the State which will never be erased. His passing has left a void which will not soon be filled. His family and friends, however, may find solace in the fact that he left this life as he had lived it, with a clear conscience, with pride in work well done. He was the captain of his Soul.

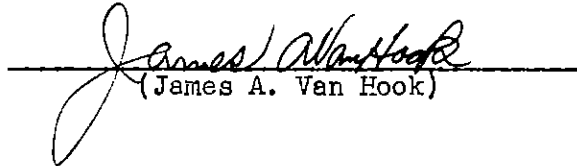


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