

FILED

NOV 10 1949

*E. H. Galt, Jr.*  
DEPUTY CLERK

IN MEMORIAM

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ROBERTS

Benjamin Franklin Roberts was born in Franklin, Tennessee, July 23, 1880. In his youth he had the advantage of an education sufficient to qualify for the then enviable profession of school teaching. In those days, when the opportunity for higher education was the privilege of a relatively small minority, and when public elementary education had not become universal, a school teacher need not necessarily have collegiate degrees. But with or without degrees, he must of necessity be a philosopher and psychologist; a judge and a counsellor; an arbiter of human differences and an advocate of justice; a disciplinarian, unyielding, yet sympathetic; well versed in affairs of community and national interest and have a character well rooted in the fundamental virtues, with a deep and convincing religious faith. Such were the qualifications that Ben F. Roberts brought to the school room in Yellow Pine, in Webster Parish in 1903.

These qualities also have their importance in the profession of Law, and those of our brothers who have possessed them in the fullest measure have contributed most to the exaltation of the legal fraternity,--Ben F. Roberts made his contribution in this respect for which we now honor him in this service and for which his memory will long be revered.

In 1906 Mr. Roberts went to Arcadia to begin the study of law and was soon thereafter admitted to practice. His legal career began in Arcadia under the firm name of Barnette, Roberts and Goff. In 1912 the firm dissolved and Mr. Roberts moved to Shreveport and from then until his death, July 17, 1949, he was one of the most prominent members of the Louisiana Bar.

Mr. Roberts was appointed City Attorney for the City of Shreveport in November 1918, in which capacity he served with distinction through successive administrations until November 1930. He was again appointed City Attorney in November 1946, in which capacity he was still serving at the time of his death. In all he served approximately fifteen years; a much longer period than any other person. During these years the City of Shreveport enjoyed its most progressive expansion and the legal archives of the City and Parish are filled with records reflecting the prominent part played by Mr. Roberts in this development.

Mr. Roberts was an eminent lawyer and if it must be said that he distinguished himself in any one field more than another, it was as an authority on municipal corporations.

Few lawyers have had a more general practice than Ben F. Roberts and there was no branch of the law in which he could not more than meet his opponent in the State and Federal Courts. The courts and lawyers alike had a profound respect for his ability.

In the trying years of the depression of the early thirties, as the first manager of the newly created Home Owners Loan Corporation, Ben F. Roberts rendered a faithful and efficient service to thousands of home owners in the Shreveport area. Again the property records of Caddo Parish recorded thousands of times the signature of Ben F. Roberts,- a fact of which abstractors and title examiners will be reminded for many generations yet to come.

Ben F. Roberts was no stranger in the Federal Courts; and in recognition of his ability in this branch of the law he was appointed by the President to serve as United States District Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana, which post he filled from September 1935 to February 1937.

In December 1907 Ben F. Roberts was married to Rookh Atkins of Arcadia. From both sides of her family Mrs. Roberts descended from prominent north Louisiana pioneer families. The names of her forebears, Marsalis and Atkins, are linked with the early history of northwest Louisiana.

Two daughters, Ella Frances, now the wife of Milton D. Todd, and Mary Atkins, now the wife of R. J. Brock, were born to them. Mrs. Roberts and both daughters were with him when death brought to an end his full and useful life.

There are so many tributes of a personal nature which might deservedly be paid Mr. Roberts, but an attempt to name them all would be in vain, but this must be said of him; he was always the friend

and counsel of the young lawyer. Whenever a new question or a frightening new experience came before the young lawyer he could always run to Mr. Roberts, or to "Mr. Ben" or to "Judge Roberts" by which names he was affectionately called, for counsel and a generous share of his infinite wisdom and experience.

Mr. Roberts was active in civic and church life. Space would not permit reference to the numerous such affairs to which he gave generously in time and material things, but this memorial would not be complete without recognition of his service to Centenary College of Louisiana and the Methodist Church.

He was for many years a member of the Board of Trustees of Centenary College, and served as its legal adviser. For a number of years he gave a cash award, known as the "B. F. Roberts Award", to the student of the College who excelled in the Roberts oratorical contest. This interest in young people was characteristic.

As a member of the Board of Stewards of the First Methodist Church of Shreveport, for more than three decades, he was identified with the religious life of the community and State as a prominent church layman. For many years through the medium of the Men's Bible Class of his Church he shared his knowledge of religion and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and thereby left the imprint of his character upon the hundreds who were privileged to attend his classes.

The passing of Benjamin Franklin Roberts brought to an end a long and illustrious career. His brothers of the Bar record this testimonial of their high esteem of Mr. Roberts in personal and professional life. To his widow and daughters and to his surviving brothers and sisters we express our sincerest feelings of sympathy for their irreparable loss.

*Chris Bennett*  
CHAIRMAN

*James W. Hammett*  
*W. W. Jones*