

REESE'S RAKE-OFF

How Chief Justice Reese Raided the State Treasury

ASK HIS FRIENDS TO EXPLAIN

THE VOUCHER

The legislature of 1887 appropriated public money to provide each of the supreme judges with stenographic or clerical assistance, in order that the supreme judges might be enabled to devote more time to the consideration of cases. The state constitution expressly forbids any district or supreme judge from receiving, in addition to his salary of \$2,500 per year, "any other compensation, perquisite, or benefit, for and on account of his office, in any form whatsoever." Hence, it is only fair to presume that the legislature intended that the appropriation made for stenographic and clerical assistance should be used only for such assistance, actually rendered the supreme judges.

Judge Reese apparently started out to use that appropriation honestly, but the records show that he did not hold out faithful to the end. Of the 1887 appropriation, \$1,070 was drawn by C. F. Williams, who in all probability performed some services for the judge; \$6.00 was paid to E. E. Good; \$142.00 was drawn by Judge Reese in the name of H. A. Reese, his son, and \$88.00 in the name of C. B. Reese, his wife. In no instance did H. A. Reese or C. B. Reese sign the vouchers on which warrants were issued and money drawn from the state treasury. The vouchers are made out for "stenographic or clerical assistance" performed by H. A. Reese or C. B. Reese, as the case may be, but it seems neither H. A. Reese nor C. B. Reese were sufficiently competent as "clerical assistants" to make out and sign their own vouchers. They were paid at the rate of \$4.00 per day. The judge's own salary amounted to about \$8.00 per day. He frittered away \$8 a day time making out and signing vouchers for \$4-a-day clerks. But perhaps H. A. Reese and C. B. Reese had conscientious scruples against certifying and signing claims for services they had not rendered. Perhaps they did not know the state owed them anything.

The legislature of 1889 following the precedent established in 1887, made an appropriation for clerical assistance. "The cat had tasted the cream," and nobody outside of the Reese family was permitted to draw a cent of that portion of the appropriation available for paying Judge Reese's "assistants." Judge Reese drew \$384 thereof in the name of C. B. Reese, his wife, and \$132 in the name of H. A. Reese, his son. In every instance the vouchers are signed by Judge Reese.

The fac-similes herewith are made from photographs taken at the State Capitol expressly for the World-Herald. The original vouchers may be seen any day at the auditor's office. The original warrants are on file in the treasurer's office. The three cuts it will be noticed all refer to one claim of C. B. Reese. The voucher was filed in the auditor's office May 31, 1889. It was the first voucher filed in the name of C. B. Reese. At the top it says, "The State of Nebraska to C. B. Reese, Dr. for services as clerical assistance to M. B. Reese, Judge of Supreme Court, 12 days—@ \$48.00." In the upper left hand corner is written in Judge Reese's own handwriting: "I certify the same to be correct, M. B. Reese, Judge Supreme

THE STATE OF NEBRASKA, GENERAL FUND

To: C. B. Reese Dr.

For: Services as clerical assistance to M. B. Reese, Judge of Supreme Court, 12 days—@ \$48.00 \$48.00

I hereby certify that the above account is correct and just, and has not been paid nor any part thereof.

(Sign here) M. B. Reese

Examined and Adjusted: \$48.00 J. H. Benton Auditor Public Accounts.

Deputy: H. G. Bowerman

Approved: \$48.00 J. H. Benton Secretary of State.

Received of: J. H. Benton Auditor of Public Accounts.

Warrant No. 52952 Amount \$48.00

(Sign here) C. B. Reese P. M. B. Reese

Court." The printed line, "I hereby certify that the above account is correct and just, and has not been paid nor any part thereof" was intended to be followed by the signature of the claimant. C. B. Reese should have signed just below it. But notice that M. B. Reese, her lord and master, chief justice of Nebraska, signed his own name there! Perhaps he knew he was the real claimant, and that C. B. Reese's name was used merely as a blind.

On the strength of this voucher, Auditor Benton, by his deputy, H. G. Bowerman, drew warrant No. 52,952, fac-simile of which is herewith presented. He delivered the warrant to M. B. Reese, as is shown by the receipt at the bottom of the voucher. Then M. B. Reese carried the warrant to the treasurer's office and was there paid \$48 in cash. He endorsed the warrant "C. B. Reese, pr. M. B. Reese," as the photographic reproduction

shows.

Nine other warrants, similar to this, but with different amounts, were drawn in favor of C. B. Reese upon vouchers made out and signed by M. B. Reese, and M. B. Reese drew the money on every one of them. Six warrants were drawn in favor of H. A. Reese upon vouchers made out and signed by M. B. Reese, and M. B. Reese drew the money upon all but one of them—only one is endorsed in the handwriting of H. A. Reese, or, rather, all except one are endorsed in the handwriting of M. B. Reese.

Does any sane man believe that C. B. Reese, wife of Chief Justice Reese, rendered him an hour's clerical service?

In view of all the surrounding circumstances, isn't it more likely that he did his own clerical work and pocketed the money he drew on her warrants?

H. A. Reese, son of Chief Justice

Reese, graduated from the State University at Lincoln in 1891, after completing a four years' course. Do you believe he had much time to render clerical assistance to his father?

Isn't it very evident that Judge Reese originated the practice which has been followed by all republican supreme judges ever since—having some relation draw the appropriation for clerical assistance?

That bad practice helped to defeat Judge Post for re-election. It defeated Judge Harrison for renomination. It means the defeat, two years hence, of Judge Norval. All of these judges merely followed a precedent established by Judge Reese, "the father of nepotism in Nebraska." Can he escape the punishment meted out to Post and Harrison?

COPY OF CERTIFICATE FROM STATE AUDITOR.

State of Nebraska,
County of Lancaster,
Office of Auditor of Public Accounts.

I, John F. Cornell, auditor of public accounts for the State of Nebraska, do hereby certify that the dates, names of warrants, warrant numbers, and amounts of the several vouchers given in the list below, are true and correct, as the same appear of record in my office:

A list of vouchers on file in my office, showing date of filing, name of claimant, serial number of warrant issued, and amount of same:

March 31, 1888, H. A. Reese, warrant No. 46670, amount \$32.
September 13, 1888, H. A. Reese, warrant No. 48361, amount \$10.
January 4, 1889, H. A. Reese, warrant No. 49421, amount \$28.
April 9, 1889, H. A. Reese, warrant No. 52031, amount \$24.
MAY 31, 1889, C. B. REESE, WARRANT NO. 52952, AMOUNT \$48.
June 14, 1889, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 53188, amount \$40.
June 29, 1889, H. A. Reese, warrant No. 53312, amount \$48.
August 12, 1889, H. A. Reese, warrant No. 54012, amount \$132.
August 30, 1889, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 54156, amount \$64.
September 15, 1889, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 54384, amount \$36.
September 30, 1889, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 54631, amount \$40.
October 18, 1889, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 55155, amount \$64.
November 1, 1889, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 55226, amount \$44.
November 27, 1889, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 55354, amount \$40.
December 24, 1889, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 56173, amount \$56.
January 9, 1890, C. B. Reese, warrant No. 56427, amount \$40.

And I further certify that in none of the above mentioned vouchers did either H. A. Reese or C. B. Reese sign as claimants, but in each instance the same were signed by M. B. Reese, who also in each instance receipted for the state warrant issued upon each of said vouchers.

Given under my hand and official seal this 26th day of October, A. D. 1899.

JOHN F. CORNELL,
(SEAL.) Auditor of Public Accounts.
(Stamp.) Per C. C. Pool, Deputy.

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