

# Old Orleans

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## Justice Bertram E. Harcourt 1881-1940

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"The wise control their tongues, speak with wisdom,  
and enlarge the meaning of the law.

Those who dwell in the law and its delights, who mediate  
on the law and follow it, do not forsake the law.

They are not proud of what they have received, nor do  
they envy others."

The Dhammapada

Bertram E. Harcourt was born in Lockport, NY on Aug. 14, 1881. He received his education in the public schools and graduated from Lockport Union School. In 1896 he came to Medina where he began his study of law under Stanley Filkins and Albert J. Coe. At age 21 he passed his exams and was admitted to the bar. He then joined the law firm which became known as Filkins, Coe and Harcourt. When Mr. Filkins died, the firm became Coe and Harcourt and upon the death of Mr. Coe, Bertram Harcourt continued the office, which was located in the S.A. Cook building, under his own name. His private practice became one of the most extensive in Orleans County, and his reputation for integrity and knowledge of the law was considered impeccable. He served several terms as Medina Village Attorney from 1908-1923 as well as attorney for the Medina School District. He represented many businesses and corporations in Orleans County, among them the Niagara, Lockport & Ontario Power Co. and the New York Central Railroad. He also served as an attorney locally for several insurance companies and banks. In fact, he was one of the organizers of the Medina Trust Co. and served as a director and secretary of the bank through 1939.

Bertram Harcourt was a Republican in his politics, becoming one of the most influential members of the party in western New York. For several years he served as Orleans County Republican Chairman until it became a conflict of interest. He first entered public office in 1925 when he was elected County Judge and Surrogate. This followed the death of Orleans County Judge Gerald Fluhrer in April 1925 and the subsequent appointment of Judge David A. White by our Democrat Governor Alfred E. Smith.

Judge Harcourt was re-elected in 1931 and again in 1937 after receiving the endorsement of both major political parties. In 1939 he was a Republican candidate for Justice of the Supreme Court in the Eighth Judicial District composed of eight western New York counties. Justice Harcourt was elected by the largest majority ever given a judicial candidate in the district up to that time. He assumed his post on Jan. 1, 1940 but was to serve less than a year due to his ill-fated death.

Justice Harcourt had been called to preside over Supreme Court sessions in Brooklyn and suffered a heart attack while walking along Fortieth Street in New York City during December 1940.

He was a charter member of the Medina Lodge of Elks and became its first secretary. He was named Exalted Ruler in 1907, serving one term. Justice Harcourt was also a member of the Medina Masonic Lodge, Medina Chapter R.A.M., Alpha-Omega, Council R&SM, Lockport Commander Knight Templar, Buffalo Consistory and Ismalia Templar A.A.O.M. Shrine. Membership in other organizations included the Niagara Falls Country Club, the Buffalo Athletic Club, the Orleans and New York State Bar Associations, County Welfare Board and Methodist Church of Medina.

In 1905 he married Bertha H. Hacking of Newfane. They had no children. Their home was first located on Park Avenue and then later on West Center Street in Medina.

"A living creature esteems  
many things higher than life  
itself, but this preference itself  
declares the will to power."