

REDMOND SELECMAN COLE

By Fannie Brownlee Misch*

Redmond Selecman Cole was born on a farm in Andrew County, Missouri, near Bolckow on August 22, 1881. His parents were James Buchanan Cole and Virginia Lee Bedford Cole. He was a grandson of Lieutenant Alexander Marshall Bedford and Mary Elizabeth Selecman of Andrew County. His paternal grandparents were Captain James Lowry and Elizabeth (née Patterson) Cole of Virginia.

His early interest in family history stemmed from the fact that his youth was spent among the Missouri Selecman and Bedfords, all of whom had known their family relations for generations. It was a challenge to develop the kinship when Cousin Charley Selecman married Cousin Eliza Selecman. Redmond Cole found on further examination that his grandmother Eliza Patterson Cole was the daughter of Andrew Patterson and Elizabeth Cole, which gave the unravelling of family genealogy further impetus.

Redmond Cole moved with his parents to Kirksville, Missouri in 1898 where his father completed a course in osteopathy, and he himself attended Kirksville Normal school. His father established a practice as an osteopath in Columbia, Missouri, and continued there until his death in 1942.

Redmond Cole entered Missouri University in Columbia, graduating with A.B. degree in 1905 and with a master's degree in 1906. He then studied law, and passed the Missouri Bar examination in 1909. He was president of the student body while in the University, and edited the *University Independent*, the student weekly. He represented the school in interstate debates several times, once in Oklahoma. He was a charter member of the Delta Tau Delta social fraternity and a member of the Delta Sigma Rho debating Fraternity, also the Phi Alpha Delta legal Fraternity. During the Saint Louis Fair in 1904, he pushed a wheel chair for sightseers to earn his way. He was a member of the college military group which chartered a train and attended the Jamestown Exposition in 1907 under Colonel Frazier as Commandant.

Soon after coming to Oklahoma in April, 1909, he passed the Oklahoma State Bar examination, and located in Pawnee in

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the law office of Louis Johnson where he succeeded Charles Wrightsman who was moving to Tulsa. When Judge N. E. McNeill was appointed County Judge of Pawnee County to fill a vacancy caused by a death, Redmond Cole was appointed to take his place as County Attorney, and served until 1915. This was the beginning of his life-long friendship with Judge McNeill and of his active entry into politics serving at different times as chairman of the Democratic central committee, and as Democratic county chairman. He was draft registrar in World War I, 1915-17, and was Mayor of Pawnee in 1919. He was appointed Assistant U.S. District Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma, with residence in Oklahoma City, and served until 1919 when he was elected to the office of Judge of the Pawnee-Tulsa District. He was re-elected in 1922 but resigned this office in 1923 to join the legal department of the Gulf Oil Company in Tulsa, and remained in this work until his retirement in 1950. He served as President of the Tulsa County Bar Association in 1948.

Redmond Selecman Cole was married on June 11, 1910, to Miss Mary Thompson Cross, a graduate of Missouri University, Class of 1908, and a teacher in Missouri and in Ceres, California, schools. Judge and Mrs. Cole were the parents of two daughters: Olivia Harris and Virginia Bedford. Many of the family vacation trips down through the years were planned so as to do research on family history and further genealogical interests. His youngest daughter once told a news reporter that much of their vacation trip had been spent "in cemeterys viewing epitaphs!" Judge Cole owned an extensive genealogical library, and freely made several hundred volumes available to those interested, including many from distant places who were searching for family history. More than one hundred scrap-books of history and politics are evidence of Judge Cole's interest in keeping a record of events and current affairs. His library also contained many historical volumes on the old West.

Judge Cole's interest in history began as a student in College. He was a charter member of the Missouri Historical Society and a Life Member of the Wisconsin and the Kansas historical societies. He joined as one of the first Life Members of the Oklahoma Historical Society in 1911, and was soon elected as a member of this Society's Board of Directors, serving until 1917. He was elected again as a member on the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Society in 1948, and remained a member of the Board until his death in 1959. During this time, he served as 2nd Vice President (1948-50) and as 1st Vice President (1950-58). Judge Cole derived much pleasure as a Director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, knowing well the history of the State and working for its preservation. He was an avid first-day cover and stamp collector, looking on stamps issued in their

sequence like a tabulated record of history. Judge Cole did not live to complete the family histories that he had worked on for years, but many genealogical books have sections which he prepared, and many papers in both the Society of Mayflower Descendants and the Sons of the American Revolution are proofs of his knowledge, for he helped others to work out their family lines. He was recognized as one of the leading genealogical researchers in this country.

Judge Cole was elected (after his retirement from professional life) President of the Oklahoma Society of Sons of the American Revolution, and was elected in 1952 as Historian General of the national S.A.R., the first Oklahoman named to a general office since the group was organized in 1889. He was Vice President of the South Mississippi District of the S.A.R. at the time of his death. Judge Cole also was active in the American Society of Mayflower Descendants, having assisted in organizing and having served as Governor of the Oklahoma group in this Society.

He was well known in fraternal circles including the Odd Fellows and the Masons, in the latter being a member of the Commandery, Knights Templar and of the Temple, Akdar Shrine. His religious membership was in the Methodist Church, having first joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Redmond Selecman Cole died suddenly of a heart attack on July 16, 1959, while visiting in the home of his daughter in Muskogee.¹ Funeral services were held in the Boston Avenue Methodist Church in Tulsa, and entombment was in the Rose Hill Mausoleum.

William James said, "The use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it." Judge Cole's love and knowledge of history given in American genealogical writings and his history talks to children and adults, Junior Citizen groups, patriotic service groups, schools and clubs will be remembered and will long influence the lives of many in our great country.

¹Judge Redmond S. Cole is survived by his wife, who continues to reside in the family home at 1312 South Owasso, Tulsa, and their two daughters. He died in the home of his eldest daughter, Mrs. Joy Donald Cole (Olivia), in Muskogee. The daughter Olivia married twice: Her first child, Samuel E. Wilson, was born after the death of her first husband in a car accident; her two children born of the second union are Mary Patricia and Joy Donald Cole. Judge and Mr. Cole's second daughter, Virginia Bedford, married Ross Livingston Collins now American Counsel at Yaounde, Cameroun, Africa. Mr. and Mrs. Collins are the parents of four children: Mary Avery, Ross Livingston (II), Virginia Bedford and Elizabeth Garth Collins.