

ARTHUR CARTER DENISON

1861-1942

Arthur Carter Denison, son of Julius Coe and Cornelia (Carter) Denison, was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan on November 10, 1861. His parents emigrated from New York in 1855 and settled on 160 acres in Paris township, near the little village of Grand Rapids, then in the midst of primeval surrounding forests.¹

Denison received his early education in the public schools of Grand Rapids in 1878, and entered the law school at the University of Michigan Law. He was graduated with a LL.B. in 1883 and was admitted to the State Bar of Michigan on January 15, 1885. The honorary degree of LL.D. was conferred upon Judge Denison by the University of Michigan in 1916.

Denison's early experience as an attorney was gained in the office of Edward Taggart with whom he formed a partnership in 1886, under the firm name of Taggart & Denison. The Grand Rapids law firm was expanded in 1900 to include Loyal E. Knappan,² and became Taggart, Knappan & Denison. Later, Denison was associated with Charles M. and Hugh E. Wilson, under the firm name of Taggart, Denison & Wilson.

In 1903, Denison served as president of the Grand Rapids Bar Association. He also served two terms as president of the State Bar of Michigan (1906-1907). In 1904-1905, he was a member of the Grand Rapids Board of Education and served as its president in the latter year. He was also a member of the Peninsular Club, the Kent Country Club, and an attendant at the Park Congregational Church.³

On January 31, 1910, President William Howard Taft appointed Denison United States District Judge for the Western District of Michigan. President Taft was familiar with Denison and his legal abilities when he practiced before the Sixth Circuit while Taft was a circuit judge. Judge Denison was elevated to the United States Circuit Court for the Sixth Circuit by President Taft on October 3, 1911. In 1925, while a member of the Sixth Circuit, Judge Denison was appointed by President Calvin Coolidge to the Aircraft Board to study the feasibility of a national air force. On December 31, 1931, Judge Denison resigned from the bench.⁴

Having attained the age of seventy, Judge Denison relinquished his position on the bench and resumed the practice of law as a partner in the Cleveland law firm of Baker, Hostetler & Patterson. "In taking this step he was influenced by the thought that he had taken his place upon the bench somewhat early in life, and had reached the age of retirement, and might properly give attention in the few remaining years to making further provision for his family."⁵ When he died May 27, 1942, at Cleveland, Ohio, Judge Denison was still associated with the firm.

In 1886, Judge Denison married Susie L. Goodrich, daughter of Hiram Goodrich, of Grand Rapids. Before her death in 1896, they became the parents of three sons: John Walter, Donald Goodrich and Arthur Curtis Denison. In 1898, he married Julie Barlow, daughter of Herman G. Barlow, also of Grand Rapids, and one child was born of this marriage, Ruth Barlow Denison.⁶