

A Short Biography of Harvey D. Hinman

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Re-printed from the original by Mr. George L. Hinman, his son

Context: In May of 1979, Vito Sinisi, then Faculty Master of Hinman College, contacted George L. Hinman, the son of Harvey D. Hinman to whom Hinman College is named, to write a short biographical sketch of his father.¹ The following is what George Hinman wrote:

Harvey D. Hinman

1864-1954

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Harvey D. Hinman, for whom Hinman College was named, was one of the local community leaders who had a part in arranging for the establishment in 1949 of Harpur College (previously a branch of Syracuse University) as the State University of New York at Binghamton.

He was a vivid and strong personality who devoted a keen mind, tireless energy and great independence of spirit to the practice of his profession, the law, and to a life-long interest and vigorous participation in public affairs.

As a trial lawyer, he tried cases throughout the United States. His opening for the defense in the impeachment trial of Governor William H. Sulzer is included in the book "Famous American Jury Speeches" published some years ago by the law librarian of Columbia University.

He served in the New York State Senate when Charles Evans Hughes was Governor and became the Governor's right arm in achieving the enactment of the Hughes reform program. In 1914 Theodore Roosevelt persuaded him to run for Governor in the Republican primary in an unsuccessful effort by Roosevelt to oust the so-called Barnes machine from political power in the state. Senator Hinman refused an offer by Barnes to back him for the United States Senate, which, in those days, would have meant his election to the Senate.

He loved a good fight and throughout his public career was a joyous battler for the right, an implacable foe of hypocrisy and of any betrayal of the public trust.

He was born in 1864 on a Chenango County farm, seventy-five years after the inauguration of Washington and a year before the death of Lincoln. He was born and grew to adolescence, and beyond, before the telephone, before the electric light bulb, before the automobile, before the airplane, before the radio or television. He died in 1954, at ninety, well into the nuclear age.

The world changed but the values acquired in the rural society of upstate New York in the mid-nineteenth century America, did not. The lessons of the Old and New Testaments, especially of the parables and of these, especially of the Good Samaritan, were always with him.

Above all, there was always with him the habit and the value of hard work. From his farm background he recognized hard work as the touchstone of individual survival, security and success; as the indispensable essential to the production of economic wealth, in turn the first and indispensable condition of social progress and social justice; and above all, as the key to individual happiness, which, indeed, it was to him throughout his life.

His name brings to the tradition of this college these old and time tested values. In turn, this college brings to his name a distinction he would have valued more than any other - - association with youth, with opportunity for youth, with excellence in the pursuit of learning.

In his own pursuit of learning, he had gone to school in a one room schoolhouse and then to the academy in the village five miles away. He had taught school to earn money for his legal education at Albany Law School.

He knew the value of education and, throughout his life, he was on the side of the young.²

¹ Personal letter from Vito F. Sinisi to George L. Hinman, Binghamton, NY, 24 May 1979.

² George L. Hinman, "Harvey D. Hinman, 1864-1954, on file in Hinman archives in folder Harvey Hinman Biography.