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Scott E. Leslie (1881-1941)

In the October issue of the Educator we briefly announced the death of S. E. Leslie. In this issue we give more detailed information regarding Mr. Leslie and his work. Those who knew Mr. Leslie personally and were acquainted with his work, considered him one of the most skillful and talented penman the profession has produced. He was skilled in all types of penwork and appeared in many of the prominent disputed handwriting cases.

Scott E. Leslie was born in a log cabin in Gratiot Co., Michigan, in 1881, but never had ambition to be President of the United States, for even one term. He attended country school in Michigan, and at the age of nine moved to Ohio with his parents.

His first interest in improving his penmanship was inspired by his father who, unable to read a poorly scrawled essay that young Scott had brought from school, informed his son that if he didn't improve his writing he would take him out in the woodshed and teach him how to write. This "inspiration" was soon supplemented by an itinerant teacher of writing who stopped in the village for the purpose of organizing a writing class. After collecting the money from an enthusiastic class, and giving two or three lessons, the teacher suddenly disappeared.

However, S. E. began a serious effort to improve his writing, and later while he was a soldier in the Spanish American War, came in contact with another itinerant penman, who further inspired him. After being mustered out of the Army with an

"Honorable Discharge" in 1898, he went to Valparaiso, Indiana, where he came under the instruction of H. B. Lehman and W. A. Hoffman for a few weeks.

In 1900, while a freshman in Alma College, Alma, Michigan he accidentally came across a copy of the "Artist-Penman." It is all the old timers know, was a forerunner of the "Business Educator," and the present "Educator." This discovery was a landmark in his penmanship career, for he remained up until nearly four o'clock in the morning spell-bound by the unbelievably beautiful writing of Courtney, Madarasz, Zaner, Blosser, Lister, and others. Mr. Leslie stated that never since that first copy of this superb magazine did he cease to get inspiration from each issue.

Beginning in 1902, Mr. Leslie attended Hiram College for two years. There, his writing improved to such an extent that he was able to teach Writing in the Commercial Department for that tuition. His time was fully occupied at Hiram College. He was carrying classes in Latin, Greek, English, Mathematics, and English Literature. In addition to teaching Writing for his tuition, he was Editor-in-Chief of the College paper, The Hiram College Advance. He was also Secretary of the Y.M.C.A., and Treasurer of his literary society. On the side, he managed a boarding club in return for his board. Meanwhile, he was keeping up his interest in penmanship by following the copies in the "Artist-Penman" and taking correspondence courses in this subject.

In 1904, he successfully applied for a position to teach Penmanship, at Eastman College at Poughkeepsie, New York. He succeeded the late G. A. Rockwood in that institution where he remained for seven years.

During 1908, he was with the Rochester Business Institute, where he was in charge of Penmanship. He then returned to Eastman College for three years, and thence went to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he was in charge of the Commercial Work in Central High School. Upon the completion of the new Schenley High School, he was transferred there as a teacher of Penmanship. He remained in this position until 1920. During the years in Poughkeepsie and Rochester, as well as in Pittsburgh, he prepared many courses for the penmanship journals, particularly the "Business Educator."

In Cleveland, Mr. Leslie was frequently called upon in cases involving disputed documents. He had, over a period of years, studied this subject and subsequently became well known throughout Ohio in this field. He

worked on cases for four Attorneys General of the State of Ohio, as well as in many important cases for the Prosecuting Attorneys of Cuyahoga County.

In 1933, he was called to New York City to work on an important mail fraud case for the Department of Justice of the United States. Shortly afterward, at the suggestion of Albert S Osborn, he opened an office in the Woolworth Building in New York and until his death he devoted his time exclusively to the examination of documents and appearance in court in the Eastern States.

He has worked on more than sixty cases for the United States Attorney in New York City. One of these cases was that of United States vs. Waxey Gordon, which was prosecuted by Thomas E. Dewey who was then Chief Assistant in the United States Attorney's office. Later, Mr. Dewey became Special Attorney General, investigating rackets in New York City, and Mr. Leslie worked on several

cases with him. Since Mr. Dewey became District Attorney of New York County, Mr. Leslie has worked on more than one hundred cases for Mr. Dewey and his assistants, constituting the largest District Attorney's staff in the United States.

In addition to his work as an all-round penman, and more recently as an Examiner of Questioned Documents, Mr. Leslie showed himself versatile in other fields. For instance, one of his hobbies for some years was the fashioning of handmade jewelry; another, was candy and cake making at which he won prizes in contests. A few years ago in Cleveland he took a course in aviation and had approximately forty hours of solo flying before he went to New York, and gave up this hobby. More recently he took up the cello and preferred compliments on his hobbies than on the work that gave him a living.

It is interesting to note that both of Mr. Leslie's sons, C. Earl and Elwin C., are following in their father's footsteps.

Earl has been for years the engrosser for the Department of the Interior at Washington, D. C. and one of the official engrossers at the White House, while Elwin, a graduate of the Cleveland School of Art, does both engrossing and handwriting expert work in Cleveland.

He also attended summer school and evening school in the University of Pittsburgh, where he received an A. B. degree, cum laude, in 1918. At the same time, he taught one summer in Duquesne University Summer School, and also taught in the University of Pittsburgh Summer School.

After teaching a year in the Bowling Green Business University at Bowling Green, Kentucky, he went to Cleveland, Ohio, where he became associated with the Spencerian School as a teacher, and as an engrossing artist, with Mr. Claude A. Barnett.