Guide to the Jackson Ralston Autobiography typescript SCM0466

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Scope and Contents

Ralston's autobiography, which touches on topics including: family and childhood; life in Quincy, Illinois; life in Washington; congressional cases; work with labor organizations; civil liberties; European travels; and California, among others.

Biographical / Historical

(1857 – 1945) Jackson H. Ralston was a prominent lawyer at the turn of the twentieth century who devoted his career to the growing fields of international arbitration, domestic taxation issues, and teaching. Jackson H. Ralston argued before the supreme court on many occasions and his scholarly contributions were many as the author of numerous books and articles. He also lectured at Stanford University between 1929 and 1933. He represented the United States as agent and counsel in the first dispute to be submitted to the permanent court of arbitration at The Hague under the Hague Convention of 1899. In the case of The Pious Fund of the Californias v. Mexico, acting as United States agent, Ralston secured a significant victory and large financial award, including payments in perpetuity. Settlement of this dispute gave practical reality to The Hague’s new court for international dispute resolution, with the victory clearly establishing his reputation as a leader in this emerging legal field. Ralston was the son of Judge James H. Ralston, a prominent attorney and statesman who served in the Illinois State Legislature with Abraham Lincoln and Steven A. Douglas, and who was also once a candidate for chief justice of the California State Supreme Court. Despite his father’s untimely death when he was a young child, Ralston was committed to following in his footsteps, graduating from Georgetown University with a LLB degree in 1876 and gaining admittance to the bar. Two years later, he started a legal practice in Quincy, Illinois. In 1897, he was awarded a Doctor of Law degree in Washington, D.C. by the National University School of Law, which later merged with George Washington University Law School. While Ralston spent many years in the Washington, D.C. area and traveled abroad extensively, Northern California was his home. Born in 1857 in Sacramento, CA, he later died in 1945 at the age of 88 in Palo Alto, CA. The Jackson H. Ralston Prize in International Law was established at Stanford Law School in 1972 in his memory by his widow, Opal V. Ralston.

Biographical information cited from: law.stanford.edu/directory/jackson-ralston/

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