

January 1928

Suggestions from the Clerk's Office

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Recommended Citation

Cornelius Westervelt, Suggestions from the Clerk's Office, 6 Dicta 20 (1928).

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SUGGESTIONS FROM THE CLERK'S OFFICE

IF the Clerk's office of the District Court has in any degree given prompt and efficient service, it is largely due to the co-operation, good will and assistance contributed by members of the Bar, who are, almost exclusively, its patrons, and we wish to take this opportunity of expressing our deep appreciation and thanks, and giving assurance that the spirit of friendliness is mutual, and that we wish every lawyer would feel that this office is his office and every employee a friend.

It is a pleasure to serve in any way we can and we are happy to answer all questions. Occasionally, however, we are met by one that stumps us. For example, a lady recently came in very hurriedly and asked, "Is this the place where you get divorces?" We told her that in a way it was but that she would have to get an attorney. Whereupon she inquired, "How much does one of them things cost, and would not a lawyer do just as well?" We admit that this baffled our entire office force. Fortunately, major problems of the above nature do not occur every day, else our prestige as a source of information would be sadly in disrepair.

There are, however, certain difficulties and matters that interfere with the exactness and efficiency with which this office desires to serve the members of the Bar, and perhaps a few comments along lines that would help us to give better service may not be amiss.

In an astonishing number of cases the office is hampered in its work and the exactness of the records impaired due to the attorneys' failure to exercise care enough as to minor details in the preparation of pleadings, decrees and the like. For example, in many instances, papers are almost illegible in some places, due to the use of a poor typewriter ribbon. And very often papers are improperly bound when filed. In addition, more careful attention to the following items would facilitate our work and add to the exactness of the records: the giving of the correct case number; the proper spelling of the names of parties to the suit, and the proper giving of initials, so that the names in the decree may appear as given in the complaint (from which paper they are entered on the

register of actions), unless altered during the pendency of the suit by order of court. It is desirable also that where amounts of money are stated, that they be set forth both in words and in figures, and care should be taken that the figures and the amounts given in words properly correspond. The statement of the terms of court during which the decree is filed is very often erroneously made, and the April and September terms are not infrequently given as March, May, October or November.

Where blank forms are used, as in divorce decrees, care should be taken to see that the words and sentences written into the blank form, with pen or typewriter, are such that when read in connection with the printed words of the form, the sentences will be complete and the meaning clear; and repetitions or unnecessary parts of the printed form should be stricken out in order to avoid confusion and very often ambiguity.

These remarks are in no sense intended as a criticism, but are made with the hope that, through more careful attention by members of the Bar to some of the points noted, our office, in turn, will be enabled to render them more effective and exact service.

CORNELIUS WESTERVELT,
Chief Deputy Clerk, District Court.