

Denver Law Review

Volume 3 | Issue 6

Article 2

January 1926

John Knowles

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Recommended Citation

Edward Ring, John Knowles, 3 Denv. B.A. Rec. 1 (1926).

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**The
Denver Bar Association Record**

JOHN KNOWLES
By Edward Ring.

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Published by

The Denver Bar Association and devoted
to the interests of that Association
Office, 502 Symes Bldg., Denver, Colo.
For advertising space, communicate with
John R. Adams, State Capitol Bldg.,
Denver, Colo., Phone Main 5480, Branch
153.

ADVERTISING RATES

Page.....\$25.00
Half Page..... 15.00
Quarter Page..... 8.00
Wantads per line..... .25

Vol. III June 1926 No. 6

APPLICANTS.

The following applicants have been
approved by the Membership Commit-
tee and will be voted on at the meet-
ing on June 14, 1926:

Gertrude Birmingham
Francis E. Bouck
Earle L. Shaw
James G. Stanley

Gerald Hughes stated in a public ad-
dress that, if we but knew, Denver is
as interesting a city as Paris in the
days of Victor Hugo. Nothing con-
tributes more to the interest of a city
than its characters. They make life
worth living and history worth read-
ing. Such a man was John Knowles.
A stranger being never appeared in
the pages of Dickens or haunted the
banks of the Seine.

In the 80s and 90s of the last cen-
tury, a furtive and bedraggled figure
was seen skulking through the alleys
in the eastern district of our city,
foraging in the garbage cans for food.
Dr. William H. Smiley, Principal of
East Denver High School, often saw
him hanging about the garbage recep-
tacles at the basement entrance after
the luncheon recess. On a bitter win-
ter day some pioneer would meet him
and say, "Why, John, your feet are
out-of-doors, you will freeze them;
come in here and let me get you a
pair of shoes", and he would take the
vagabond into a store and provide him
with a pair. On a hot summer after-
noon some pioneer would meet him
and say, "John, why are you wearing
that filthy old cloth cage? Come in
here and let me get you a decent
straw hat", and he would buy him one.
A tramp of the alleys, a vagabond of
the streets, was John Knowles,
wealthy taxpayer and miser.

When the Gano-Downs Company de-
cided to put up the Metropolitan
Building at the corner of 16th Street
and Court Place, John Knowles was
the owner of the lots. A long-term
lease was secured providing for the
payment of a ground rental at the
rate of \$1000 per month. The rent was
payable in quarterly instalments of
\$3000. When the first instalment fell
due the landlord did not appear to col-
lect it. Nothing was heard from him,
and three months later when \$6000
was due, he failed to appear. At the
end of the year nothing had been seen
of him or heard from him. His ten-
ant, the Gano-Downs Company, had
endeavored to locate the landlord, but
he had no office, no home so far as
known, and could not be found. Ap-
prehensive that its failure to pay the
rent might imperil its rights under the
lease, Mr. Downs consulted the Com-
pany's attorney, James H. Pershing,

Esq., who assured him that the situation, while peculiar, could in no way compromise the interests of the lessee. A year and a half elapsed and the Gano-Downs Company was owing John Knowles \$18,000.

During this period of his life Harold Kountze says that Knowles kept his account at the Colorado National Bank. Punctually on the first of every month he drew out \$15. He apparently confined himself to this sum for his living expenses.

One day in the year 1918 a man fell unconscious to the sidewalk on 17th Street. An old resident of Denver and old friend of Knowles, Chauncey A. Lovelace, happened to be passing. He made his way through the little crowd, and recognizing Knowles had him taken to the County Hospital, where a few days later Denver's most eccentric citizen passed away.

Knowles possessed fine traits. His business methods were above reproach. He was straightforward and honest. He contracted no debts. At the time of his death he owed no man a dollar. His cash balance at the Colorado National Bank was \$42,000. His home was an unheated room in a building on lower 20th Street, the weekly rental of which was \$2.50. In that room, in unopened envelopes some of which were covered with the dust of years, his administrator found uncashed checks amounting to about \$5000.

Knowles was a graduate of Cornell University, a student of law though never a lawyer. He had a great regard for George P. Winters, Esq., a fellow alumnus. He left no will. Misers seldom do. Mr. Winters was appointed administrator. Alleged relatives to the number of more than forty, living in many states, appeared as claimants to his property. The estate was probated and finally divided among eighteen heirs at law, whose claims were duly established.

MAY LUNCHEON MEETING.

At the luncheon meeting held May 3, 1926, the following were admitted to membership:

Donald F. Clifford.
 Luke B. Henry
 John D. Rogers

Senator Henry Toll read an interesting address on the American Legislators' Association, which will be published in the July number of the Record.

The following resolution pertaining thereto was then adopted:

"VOTED, That The Denver Bar Association hereby records its indorsement and approval of The American Legislators' Association.

This organization, which originated with State Senator Henry W. Toll, a member of this Association, has secured the interest and cooperation of a number of responsible citizens of this state, and of a still larger number of nationally known leaders in public affairs. We believe that it may afford a useful clearing house and forum, and may result in desirable cooperation between the legislators and the legislatures of the various states. We believe that it may facilitate the enactment of uniform state laws, a subject in which lawyers of the country have shown an active interest for more than a generation, that it may produce other cooperative legislation, concerning tax matters and other important subjects, and that it may bring about a better understanding of the American problems of legislation.

We express our confidence in the present administration of the Association, and instruct our President to present the matter, in some appropriate way, to The American Bar Association for consideration at its next annual meeting, and to request it to consider the propriety of according its official approval and cooperation to The American Legislators' Association. A committee of five shall be appointed by our President to cooperate with him in this matter."

The President has appointed the following Committee of five in accordance with the above resolution:

William E. Hutton Chairman
 Justice John H. Denison
 Mary F. Lathrop
 Tyson S. Dines
 William W. Grant