



1930

Book Review: John William Sterling

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Recommended Citation

Hicks, Frederick C., "Book Review: John William Sterling" (1930). *Faculty Scholarship Series*. 4712.
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John William Sterling, Class of 1864 Yale College. By John A. Garver. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1929. pp. x, 113.

The author of this informing and readable book was the professional associate of John W. Sterling for twenty-five years, during sixteen of which he was his law partner. He is uniquely qualified, therefore, by contact and experience to serve as legal adviser of the Trustees of the Sterling estate in their administration of it for educational progress in accordance with the wishes of the testator. The magnitude and importance of this task may be realized by recalling that to Yale University alone Mr. Sterling's benefactions, with accruing income, may exceed \$35,000,000. Already eighteen professorships have been endowed, large sums have been set aside for scholarships and fellowships, and the following Sterling buildings have been constructed, or are planned or are in course of construction: the Chemical Laboratory, the Hall of Medicine, the University Library, dormitories, a graduate school, and the Law School.

The last of these, the Sterling Law School building, will be not only an unusually beautiful memorial to John W. Sterling the lawyer, but at the same time a home for legal education lacking no essential for comfort and efficiency. Occupying an entire city square it will contain, besides the necessary offices and class rooms, reading rooms and bookstacks with shelving for 400,000 volumes, an auditorium, dormitories, and a dining hall. Its completion, in July, 1931, will be a signal event in the history of American legal education.

Mr. Garver's biographical sketch is significant to lawyers not alone because it gives an intimate picture of an outstanding benefactor of education in general and of legal education in particular, but because of the light which it throws on the conditions of law study and practice beginning in 1865. Much of the story is told by means of verbatim quotations from Mr. Sterling's diary. In these quotations may be read their author's account of his successes and failures, his foibles and peculiarities, his opinion of his legal associates, and the stages in his progress from a clerkship to the headship of a great law firm. Because he shunned all publicity, taking no part in the race for professional reputation through advocacy in the courts, and because of the great news value of his benefactions, he is probably popularly remembered to-day chiefly as a multimillionaire. Emphasizing the fact that "the foundations of his fortune were the results of his professional labors," and illustrating by example the single-minded devotion that he gave to a great law practice, Mr. Garver's book is a salutary corrective to possible misconceptions concerning Mr. Sterling's status as a legal figure.

New Haven, Conn.

FREDERICK C. HICKS.

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