

History of Charles O. Austin

Mr. Austin was born in Palmyra Missouri. He later moved to Fulton and completed his college education at Westminster College. At the age of 19 earning only \$25 a month he first started as a bank clerk in 1890 at Marion Savings Bank in Palmyra Missouri. In 1893 he was made assistant cashier of the bank. In 1895 he was appointed State Bank Examiner of Missouri and in April 1897 he was elected cashier of the Merchant's National Bank in St. Louis. In 1901 when he was 30 he was elected as vice-president of the American Banker's Association and in September 1902 he attained area-wide prominence as vice-president of the National Bank of North America at Chicago. At the time he was director of Jackson Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago and a vice president of the Illinois Banker's Association. Shortly after that he was named president of the Missouri Bankers Association. He was made treasurer of the American Bankers Association in 1904, the same year that his full-page picture appeared among 10 others, under the caption, "Prominent Bankers of the United States" in "The Chicago Banker." One of the ten was Charles G. Daws, later elected 30th Vice-President of the United States (1925-1929).

After such a strenuous career, poor health forced him to give up business in Chicago and go to New Mexico where he lived a year on a ranch. This move led him to San Antonio in 1906, where he entered the real estate and mortgage business. He was elected President of the Real Estate Exchange in 1913 and of the Bexar County Highway League in 1914. For two years he was a Chamber of Commerce vice-president.

John S. Patterson, State Commissioner of Insurance and Banking appointed him State Bank Examiner in July, 1915, and assigned him to the Fort Worth District. The

following year he was named Deputy Bank Commissioner, and in September of that year following the death of Patterson, he succeeded him as State Commissioner.

Mr. Austin served as banking commissioner at two different periods, once under James E. Ferguson and then by appointment of Gov. Miriam A. Ferguson. At one time he declared his intention of running for governor of Texas in the 1928 election but later declined. Mr. Austin was recognized as one of the leading banking authorities of Texas. In 1938-1942 he served as Chairman of the Liberty County Democratic Executive Committee and as a Cleveland City Councilman from 1935 to 1939.

Mr. Austin, with 1st wife Evadne, moved to Cleveland in 1926 when he purchased controlling interest in the Farmer's State Bank, serving as chairman of the board until Jan. 1, 1943 when he took office as Liberty County Judge. Mr. Austin was elected to the office of County Judge of Liberty County in 1942, and was nominated for re-election in the primary of 1944.

He was active in the development of Cleveland and a leader in the incorporation of the city in 1935. He served for several years as a member of the city council. Mr. Austin donated several acres to the local American Legion Post, which was located on the land off East Houston Street for many years (the site is now occupied by the Pine Hollow and Sleepy Hollow Apartment complexes), some 15 acres to the City of Cleveland for utility sites, and supported many other civic programs during his life time. Mr. Austin was also a director of the Cleburne National Bank until the day he died.

Evadne H. Austin passed away in 1936 and is buried in row 87 lot 1 in the Cleveland Memorial Cemetery. After her death, Mr. Austin met Bessie Sims while he was in San Antonio with Cleveland Advocate publisher John Manthey during a press and

banker convention. Mr. Austin's health was still frail, and Miss Sims was Mr. Austin's favorite nurse. The two were married December 2, 1939, and resided in Cleveland after their wedding.

Mr. and Mrs. Austin would write daily letters when she went to San Antonio to take care of her ailing mother. In the daily letters Mr. Austin depicted life in Cleveland and his love for Bessie. These letters are treasured at the Austin Memorial Library along with invitations to a White House Ball from the President of the United States. The Library also has documents hand written from Presidents to Mr. Austin thanking him for his generosity and hard work.

Mr. Austin passed away in 1944 and is buried in row 87 lot 3 in the Cleveland Memorial Cemetery. The library has a large collection of newspaper clippings depicting his journey as a Bank Examiner of Texas during a time of corruption within many banks, and his efforts to clean up the Texas banking industry. While researching his biographical data, it was revealed that many articles written by Mr. Austin have come to reflect sound principles of banking, and are still being used today in the banking industry.