

## The Strykers: Military and Legal Service to the Nation

John Edwards Stryker was born on 30 October 1862 in Catskill, New York. He came to Minnesota with his family by 1870. His father was a landowner after whom Stryker Avenue in West St. Paul is named. The elder Stryker died when John was just 11 years old. He went on to graduate from Phillips Academy in Andover, MA (1880), Yale (1883), and Columbia Law (1885), also attending the University of Berlin. He practiced law in St. Paul beginning in 1886 and was appointed a Special US Counsel in timber litigation, 1894-1902, and was considered one of the three most competent patent attorneys in the US, according to a memorial delivered at his funeral in 1940 by the Ramsey County Bar Association.



Figure 1: John Edwards Stryker at Yale

An example of a case prosecuted, and won, by Mr. Stryker is cited in this memorial: As pine timber became scarce in the late 1800s in Minnesota, Congress passed an act empowering the President to authorize cutting and removal by Indians from the reservations of 'dead timber, standing or fallen.' Lumbermen interpreted this to mean any tree which in their judgement had reached its full growth and might die in the future, and cut many millions of feet in excess of that which was contracted to be delivered. Mr. Stryker took the case all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court in order to secure a definition of the terms "dead and down" and "more or less" in the contract. He recovered ample damages for the timber which had been wrongfully removed from the reservations.

Virginia Langdon Perin Stryker, John's wife, was a descendant of the NSCDA Colonial ancestor Col. John Page of Virginia, a founder of Williamsburg, VA and proponent of founding the College of William and Mary. The daughter of Army Surgeon Glover Perin, Virginia was born in Kentucky as the family traveled with Col. Perin to his various posts. She came to Minnesota at her father's last post before retirement, Fort Snelling, where he served as Assistant Surgeon General to the US Army at Fort Snelling. A capable woman, she became a Colonial Dame through the State of New York.



Figure 3: Virginia Langdon Perin Stryker in 1885



Figure 2 Fort Snelling 1888

John and Virginia's oldest son, Glover Perin Stryker, known as Perin, was born in 1892. Growing up in what was then a remote area of St. Paul, Perin and his two younger brothers decided to teach their mother to shoot, and set up a target in the yard. Virginia played along, accepting their instruction, until she raised the gun and fired, hitting the bullseye three times. She had learned to shoot at a young age, growing up on Army bases.



Figure 4: Lt. Stryker (topmost figure) and crew

convoy was so successful that “Two French officers who were at our observation post became so excited that they danced for joy, until both of them fell off the platform, instruments and all, to the ground below.” Lt Stryker was in command at the time.

Perin was wounded in a motorcycle accident, and surgeons in Europe wanted to amputate his leg, but he was able to convince them to send him home to be cared for by the family physician. The family physician saved his leg, though it bore scars for the rest of his life. After being cared for by his family, he was able to return to his previous occupation, becoming the manager for NW Fuel Co. in Minneapolis. He had worked for an uncle in Duluth before the war, learning the coal business “from the bottom up.” After learning the heavy physical labor of coal-handling, he acquired the skills to become a successful businessman. Perin died when his daughter Ruth was 8 years old. She grew up very close to her grandparents John and Virginia.

Grandfather John in later years was a distinguished figure, wearing three piece suits with a watch and chain and possessing a regal bearing. Yet, he was also very warm, taking young Ruth to the movies (Lionel Barrymore was a favorite) and giving her \$5 to get something to wear for her first date. He was proud of his Dutch ancestry and was a member of the Holland Society of New York. To his young granddaughter, he did not speak of his distinguished career as US District Attorney or President of the Ramsey County Bar Association, but she became acquainted with all his judge and lawyer friends at his daily lunch at Alverdes.

Several of John Edwards and Virginia Stryker’s descendants continue their legacy of service as well as involvement with the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of Minnesota.

Perin served in the University of Minnesota’s Cadet Corps and trained at Fort Sheridan in Illinois before embarking from New York on the *Laplant* bound for Southampton, England in December 1917.

He served in the 55<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment in France and first saw action August 30, 1918 at the Vesle Front in Crunoy, France, and again at Argonne Woods, considered the defining final battle of WWI, from September 26 - November 11, 1918. A description of one encounter in which his artillery successfully halted a German



Figure 5: John E. Stryker in later years

**Resources:**

1870 US Federal Census for Belle Plaine MN, 1900, 1910, 1920 US Federal Census for St. Paul, MN, Accessed through Ancestry.com online database, August 2019.

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Cutler, Frederick Morse, *The Fifty Fifth Artillery*, Worcester, MA: Commonwealth Press, 1920, pp. 183-205.

Fort Snelling photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.

Marquis, A. N., *The Book of Minnesotans* St. Paul: 1907

*Polk's St. Paul City Directory*. St. Paul: R. L. Polk & Co. 1930

Private papers of Ruth Stryker-Gordon.

State of Minnesota Military Service record for Glover Perin Stryker. Hard copy obtained from Minnesota State Archives.

Stryker Family Tree on Ancestry.com.

*US WWI Troop Transport Ships 1918-1919* Accessed through Ancestry.com 26 August 2019

*Year Book of the Holland Society of New York*, New York City: 1919. P. 189