James Parker Hall
by Livingston Hall and James Parker Hall, Jr.

In October, 1904, two years after the Law School was founded, James Parker Hall, then 32 years old, became its dean. For the next 24 years he led the school along the path of greatness foreseen and prepared for by President William Rainey Harper.

This was no easy task. Himself a Harvard Law School graduate of the class of 1897, Dean Hall had to meld the Harvard tradition of excellence with the innovative ideas of Ernst Freund which President Harper had eagerly adopted.

Where Harvard taught nothing but "pure law" in its law school, the Law School at Chicago was to integrate into its curriculum courses that Harvard believed belonged properly to the departments of political science and sociology. Upon recommendation of the first Curriculum Committee, composed of Dean Joseph H. Beale and the then Professors Hall and Whittier, at Chicago courses and seminars in administrative law, federal jurisdiction and practice, legislation, municipal corporations, legal ethics, and Roman and international law could be elected in the second and third years.

Another serious difference came from the fact that Harvard used only the "case method" established by Langdell and Ames, while Chicago was prepared to consider also using lectures and the textbook method.

Finally, the new Law School would run on the quarter system, would take students after three years of college and permit them to count the first year of law school as credit also for a college degree, would admit women, and would give a doctor's degree, the J.D., instead of Harvard's LL.B.

To accomplish this melding of the Chicago innovations with the Harvard standards of overall excellence, President Harper secured for Chicago a truly great faculty of predominantly full-time teachers. Dean Beale came for two years on loan from Harvard. James Parker Hall was brought into the fold from Stanford Law School, where he had been an associate professor for two years, along with Clarke B. Whittier. Julian W. Mack and Blewitt Lee, who came to Chicago from Northwestern Law School, both had substantial law practices and were allowed time for practice. Floyd R. Mechem came from Michigan in 1903. Ernst Freund was moved from the Department of Political Science at Chicago to its Law School.

When Dean Beale left Chicago to return to Harvard in 1904, Dean Hall and the five other teachers listed above faced the serious task of creating an organic whole out of the divergent elements bequeathed to them by President Harper's vision. During the first decade there were added to the faculty other men who were great in their fields. These included Harry A. Bigelow, Frederic Woodward, Judge Edward Hinton, and (briefly) Roscoe Pound.

As primus inter pares, Dean Hall served the new Law School well. Roscoe Pound said of him (3 J. Legal Educ. 529): "He devoted himself to building up a great law school, a school of the highest standards, vigorously maintained, and brought the institution to a leading place among American law schools. He was...a wise administrator...Withal, he was the most considerate of leaders, under whom and with whom it was a pleasure to teach."

But Dean Hall did more than administer. He taught many subjects, especially torts and constitutional law, which he taught for 25 years. His text on constitutional law, written in 1910, was used by the LaSalle Extension University, a correspondence school, until it closed its doors in 1980. His casebook on constitutional law, published in 1913, with a 1926 supplement, was for many years a leader in its field. As Pound wrote (supra), this casebook, "a model of analysis and comprehensiveness, which held ground for more than a generation, testified to what he might have done if he had not had the burden of administrative work to carry during all but four of his twenty-five years as a full time teacher of law." Thus he held his own with the other great men on his faculty, in his own fields of law.

Dean Hall early made his choice to teach law to young men and women. James Weber Linn, in his column "Round about Chicago," wrote of Dean Hall, soon after his death on March 13, 1928: "He gave up private practice, out of which he could have made a huge income, because he loved the law. Some years ago he declined the presidency of Cornell University [his alma
mater, from which he graduated in 1894] because he delighted in the teaching of law. And his attitude toward law was always the same. He believed it to be a recorder of comparative social values and the greatest force in the world for social reorganization.

The broadening of the Chicago curriculum to include practical education, and to keep the Law School in touch with the bar, brought in a number of practicing lawyers as part-time teachers. Dean Hall recognized this need. In 1922, he was president of the Association of American Law Schools. The Association created a Committee on the Establishment of a Permanent Organization for the Improvement of the Law, of which he was a member. As a result of its report in June 1922, the American Law Institute was founded. At the Institute's first meeting on February 23, 1923, he was elected a member of its Council, and served as such until his death in 1928. The Institute brought together for the first time lawyers, judges, and law teachers in a joint effort to improve the law.

Dean Hall's heavy schedule of teaching, administration, writing, and Law Institute work, complicated by illness in his later years, did not exhaust his public service. In 1918-19, as a major in the Judge Advocate General's Department, his knowledge of constitutional law was put at the disposal of the Army. He was for many years secretary of the Abraham Lincoln Social Settlement, where he was advisor and friend to its director, Dr. Jenkin Lloyd Jones.

A prodigious worker, Dean Hall taught almost every summer, reserving to himself and his family only the month of September each year. His room at home on East Fifty-eighth Street was filled with papers and books. On the many Saturdays when the Council of the American Law Institute met in New York, he would leave Chicago by train Friday afternoon. After the Saturday meeting, he would take the night train to western New York, to spend Sunday with his mother and sister in Jamestown, and return to Chicago on the Sunday night train. This rigorous schedule produced the ulcer which after surgery caused his death from a cardiac embolism.

This account of Dean Hall goes somewhat beyond the Law School's first decade. It is fitting, however, to note that the innovative trends of the school's early years were exemplified in the whole of Dean Hall's life. President Harper and Professor Freund planned well. Dean Beale's two years left a legacy of promise to Dean Hall, his successor. And well did Dean Hall administer the trust of a law school committed to the study of the "whole field of man as a social being."

Livingston Hall is the Roscoe Pound Professor of Law Emeritus at Harvard Law School. James Parker Hall is a financial consultant and former Treasurer of the University of Chicago. The authors gratefully acknowledge the excellent history of the founding of the Law School by former Assistant Dean Frank L. Ellsworth, Law on the Midway (University of Chicago Press, 1977); and the material in the Fall 1977 issue of the Law Alumni Journal.

Harry A. Bigelow
by Sheldon Teft

Harry A. Bigelow was the youngest of that small group of young lawyers whom President William Rainey Harper brought to The University of Chicago early in the twentieth century to establish its law school. When Mr. Bigelow joined the faculty he was under 30 years of age and had been out of law school slightly more than four years. After a brief period as a clerk in a Boston conveyancing office and one semester as a part-time instructor in criminal law at the Harvard Law School, he had moved to Honolulu, where he spent three very active years as a junior member of the Bar of the Hawaiian Islands.

In January 1904, Acting Dean Joseph H. Beale, Jr., who was then on leave from Harvard to help President Harper organize the new law school in the West, persuaded Mr. Bigelow to abandon the practice and join the faculty at Chicago. There he spent the remainder of his life and for more than 40 years was an active member of the Law School faculty.

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