

# GEORGE KERSTEN, NOTED CRIMINAL JUDGE, DIES AT 80

## On the Bench for Many Famous Trials.

Former Judge George Kersten, who for 47 years was a member of the Cook county judiciary, spending nearly 24 years of this time in the Criminal courts, died yesterday in his home at 3740 North Harding avenue. He presided at many famous trials during the first two decades of the century.

Judge Kersten became ill last Friday, when he suffered a sudden heart attack. Pneumonia developed Sunday and physicians announced yesterday morning that he was dying. The end came at 11:30 a. m. Judge Kersten would have been 81 years old on March 22.

### First Kidnapers Sentenced.

Lawyers, fellow judges, and court attachés said yesterday that Judge Kersten, before his retirement from the bench in 1926, was considered to have more knowledge of the habitual criminal than any other jurist in the United States. During his service as a justice of the peace on Chicago's north side between 1883 and 1903, and his subsequent terms on the Circuit court bench, he tried more than 100,000 criminal cases.

It was before Judge Kersten that William Jones and Alzina Jones were convicted of kidnaping 25 years ago. Their convictions were the first ever obtained for this crime in the United States. Judge Kersten sentenced the men respectively to 30 and 25 years in the penitentiary.

It was in Judge Kersten's court that the "car barn bandits" were tried in 1904. The street car barn robberies, during one of which a policeman was murdered, were the sensations of their day. The robbers were tried and sentenced to death. Johann Hoch, the bigamist who poisoned one of his wives, was also sentenced to death by Judge Kersten.

### Loses Race for Sheriff.

Judge Kersten was a Democrat. At one time just prior to the turn of the century he was his party's candidate for sheriff of Cook county, but was defeated in the election. When he retired from the bench his record disclosed as few reversals as any judge sitting at that time.

Judge Kersten survived by his widow, Mrs. Minnie Starr Kersten, and a daughter, Mrs. Lillian Borkenhagen of Kenosha, Wis. Funeral services will be held from his home on Saturday morning after a requiem mass in St. Clement's church.

Born in the "Smoky Hollow" section of old Chicago just north of the river in 1853, the judge received his education in the public schools of the city and later studied at Standau & Wiedinger's German-American institute. In 1883 he was appointed a justice of the peace by the elder Carter H. Harrison. Three years later he was admitted to the bar.

### Elected to Bench.

In 1903 the judge was elected to the Circuit bench and began his long service in the Criminal court. While there the judge began a simplification of the criminal statutes which culminated recently in the passage of the new civil practice act and simplification of many sections of the criminal code.

In 1925, following a physical breakdown, the judge remained in a sanitarium for more than a year. At the end of this time he made arrangements to return to his duties, but because of continued poor health announced his formal retirement.

## TAKEN BY DEATH



Judge George Kersten, retired, who died yesterday at the age of 80.  
(TRIBUNE Photo.)