

FRANK H. SOMMER, EX-LAW DEAN, DIES

**N.Y.U. Official 1916-43 Was
Lawyer 64 Years—Held
Many Public Offices**

Special to The New York Times.

NEWARK, Aug. 19—Frank H. Sommer, dean emeritus of the New York University Law School and a lawyer for sixty-four years, died yesterday of a heart ailment in the home of his daughter, Miss Catherine Sommer, 482 Mount Prospect Avenue. He had made his home with her for the last few years. He would have been 85 years old on Sept. 3.

At his death, Mr. Sommer was a deputy attorney general assigned to supervising legal work of the New Jersey Public Utilities Commission. He appeared in Federal District Court here last Wednesday at a P. U. C. hearing and went home feeling ill.

He was born in Newark. His early education consisted of attending school until he was 12, when he went to work full time in a real-estate office for \$2.50 a week. From a scanty allowance he bought books, read and studied many hours by himself, and saved money for a better education.

His entrance into the field of law was brought about by his being called as a witness during the trial of his employer. His testimony was given with such clarity and directness that he was offered a position with the firm of Guild & Lum as office boy for \$3 a week. When he was 17 years old he registered at the Metropolis Law School in New York, where he attended evening classes. He graduated with honors in 1893, was admitted to the New Jersey bar the same year and became a member of the firm for which he worked as an office boy.

Mr. Sommer continued at Metropolis as a lecturer and later a professor, withdrawing for a time from private practice to devote his time to teaching and lecturing.

Became Dean in 1916

When Metropolis was merged into the law department of New York University he continued as a lecturer, specializing in real property, mortgages and suretyship. He was named dean of the law school in 1916 and served for twenty-seven years, retiring in 1943.

In 1904 Mr. Sommer was made a member of the Newark Board of Education and was subsequently appointed to the State Board of Examiners. He resigned as president of the school board in 1920.

Among the many public posts held by Mr. Sommer was Essex County Sheriff, to which he was elected in 1906. He is remembered as a "raiding" law enforcer. In 1908 Gov. Franklin Fort named him a member of the Board of Railroad Commissioners, and he served two years as president of the board. When, under Gov. Woodrow Wilson in 1911, the state passed a law creating the Public Utilities Commission, Mr. Sommer, one of the fathers of the new law, became its first counsel.

He was 75 years old when he served as chairman of the judiciary committee at the Constitutional Convention in New Brunswick in 1947. There he was a vital force in writing a new basic law effecting a complete streamlining of the New Jersey judicial process.

Mr. Sommer's active career included also service on the New Jersey Water Board; as one of a three-man committee that was named to condemn property for the new Federal Building here; as a member of the advisory board of the National Industrial Advisory Corporation in New York and Washington; as one of fifteen lawyers appointed in 1937 by the Joint Conference on Legal Education in New York State to study the problem of overcrowding of the bar in that state; and, as president of the Essex County welfare committee.

Mr. Sommer's wife, Mrs. Kate Boyce Sommer, died in 1950. Besides his daughter, he is survived by two sons, George R. of Newark, and Frank H. Sommer Jr. of Chatham, N. Y.; four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



1943

Frank H. Sommer