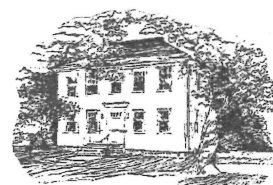


IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Remembering Foss Hopkins

One of Indian Hill's most celebrated attorneys was William Foster Hopkins, known as Foss. His autobiography, *Murder Is My Business*, was published in 1970. Hopkins was often compared to television lawyer, Perry Mason.

The son of a railroad employee, Foss was born in 1899 in Norwood. He graduated from Hughes, served in the US Army, and received a law degree from UC in 1920, fulfilling his father's wish that he become an attorney. He was an accomplished banjo player and a bridge expert in his thirties. For the first few years of his practice, it was difficult to get clients. He said that he starved for the first 4 -5 years of his career. Then Foss learned how to get court appointments and started specializing in criminal law.

Known for his intelligence and ability to win famous murder trials, Hopkins was known for pleading *not guilty* for his clients. The purpose of this was to ensure a jury trial. As Hopkins noted, there are many degrees of guilt, and at a trial one's peers make the decision. He delighted in going into a trial with a client he thought was innocent, and hearing a jury deliver a *not guilty* verdict.

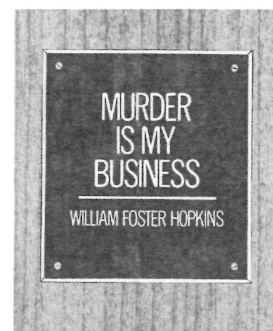
The chapter titles in his autobiography showcase his most illustrious cases: The Redheaded Widow; The Valley of the Shadow of Death; and The Lady was Not for Burning. Foss believed his most interesting case was the defense of Colonel Benjamin Smilig. When Smilig was on trial for spying and disloyalty to the USA, Hopkins skillfully cross-examined the prosecution's star witness and exposed him as a liar. Smilig, an aviation expert, was exonerated and resumed work at Wright Patterson AFB.



Hopkins most famous case was The State vs. Robert Lyons. Lyons, a meter reader for the Cincinnati Water Works, admitted to the 1956 stabbing of Audrey Pugh in Hyde Park. Lyons signed a confession and acted out the murder at the Pugh household in front of a police movie camera. The public was eager for a quick conviction. Hopkins entered a *not guilty* plea, and his office was deluged with criticism. Masterfully defending his client, Foss proved that a false confession had been attained under mental duress. He established that Lyons was not in the neighborhood at the time of Mrs. Pugh's attack. In a dramatic manner, after querying police whether they noticed anything of a foreign nature at the scene, he had Lyons stand on a chair and expose his ichthyosis (disease in which skin continuously flakes). The jury found the defendant *not guilty*.

Hopkins was very thorough in preparation for his cases and acknowledged that he burned the midnight oil. In his own words, "A criminal lawyer has to be hard as nails, and yet a sentimentalist. He has to be an expert in ballistics, a psychologist, a pathologist, and a physician, more or less."

In 1952, Hopkins married Anne Rogers. They resided in a colonial style house at 9005 Shawnee Run Road. Devoted to his wife, he enjoyed living in Indian Hill. Together they swam in their pool, and Foss cultivated a rose garden. In his autobiography, he praised his wife for her steadfast support. Hopkins retired in 1974 after practicing for 53 years, and participating in 720 homicide cases. He died in 1977. Foss Hopkins was remembered as outspoken and theatrical in court. He was respected for his preparation of cases, and for his colorful career as a top flight criminal lawyer.



The Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society has a display featuring evidence from Hopkins' cases.