

Robert H. Jackson

1892-1954

The name Robert H. Jackson is not widely known in the history of our nation. But the man that bears the name was an accomplished lawyer, judge, citizen. Born in Spring Creek, PA on February 13, 1892, Robert Houghwout Jackson was the son of a farmer. At about age 10, the family moved to Frewsburg, NY, and he graduated from that high school in 1909. He spent the next year attending Jamestown High School, taking courses that were not available at Frewsburg.

In 1910 he began his career in law. He was an apprentice for two Jamestown attorneys who helped him get started in law and also opened his eyes to politics. In 1911 he traveled to Albany to spend a year observing the State Legislature and judiciary. He spent his mornings taking law classes, and while there met first-term Senator from Dutchess County, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

At age 21 in 1913, without ever attending college, he became a member of the New York bar. For the next 20 years he held a local practice and slowly became known as one of the best lawyers in western New York. He was also active in politics during this time and his relationship with now Governor Roosevelt landed him a position on a commission that examined New York's laws and courts in 1929.

Jackson followed Roosevelt to Washington when he became President. FDR appointed him general counsel in the Treasury Department Bureau of Revenue. In 1935 he was appointed to head the tax division of the Justice Department, later the antitrust division, and then became Solicitor General. In 1940 FDR made him Attorney General of the United States.

He held this position for about a year before FDR appointed him to the Supreme Court of the United States. While serving on the nation's highest court, Jackson defended civil liberties and felt that preserving the entire Bill of Rights was essential to the strength of the nation. He was known as one of the best writers to ever serve the court. He was also the last Justice to have never attended college. During his tenure on the Supreme Court, Jackson was involved in several landmark cases including *Brown vs. the Board of Education*.

In early 1945, with World War II over, President Truman appointed Jackson to prosecute the remaining Nazis for their war crimes. Jackson served as the top prosecutor for the Nuremberg trials, and his writings to the court established the existence of the Holocaust and Hitler's Third Reich. The Nuremberg Trials were the first international war crime trials in the modern history of mankind. These proceedings, largely directed by Jackson, served as the model for war crime trial proceedings that are still used today.

In 1954, at the age of 62, Jackson died. It was through hard work and gifted intelligence that he rose to prominence. Jackson impacted national and international polity more than most people could dream of. He always called this area home, and felt that he truly lived the American dream. To start from very humble beginnings and end as one of the nation's most renowned lawyers and judges. Today the Robert H. Jackson Center memorializing his life and accomplishments is located in Jamestown, New York.