

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## WILLIAM U. LEE 1843-1924

"My purpose is to make the world a little better for having lived in it — especially for the benefit of Medina and community, in which I have for so long a time made my home."

William U. Lee  
(excerpt from Will)

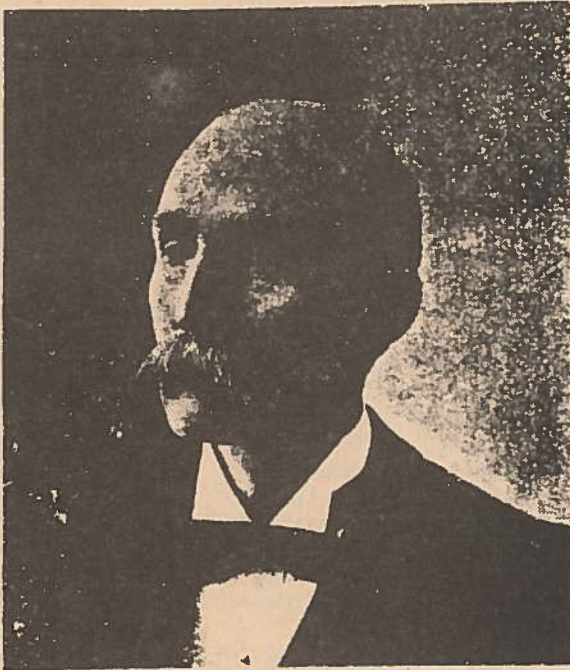
William U. Lee was born on a farm in the Town of Barre, December 21, 1843. He was a descendant of John Lee, one of the first settlers there who is credited for naming Barre after his native home in Massachusetts. William U. Lee was educated in the common schools and engaged in farming until 1883. It was then that he moved to Medina where he became one of the founders and organizers of the Medina Savings and Loan Association in 1888. He became the first president of the Board of Trustees and served in that capacity for the next thirty-six years, until his death on November 23, 1924. Other organizational officers of the bank were: Michael Slack, Vice Pres., George A. Newell, Treas. and Harry F. Welton, Sec.

Mr. Lee's community involvement was extensive. He was a member of the Medina School Board of Education serving as secretary for a portion of his term. In 1889 Mr. Lee became an organizing member of the first Board of Sewer Commissioners for the Village of Medina. The Sewer Commissioners hired a civil engineer who mapped out a modern drainage system for the village which was approved by the state in 1890.

Mr. Lee was also active in the First Presbyterian Church of Medina serving on its Board of Trustees as President.

In 1867 William U. Lee married Frances H. Church of Albion. They had one daughter Mary E. who became Mrs. Charles Whedon. In 1901 the Lees built a fine residence at 220 Park Avenue in Medina.

When Mr. Lee died in 1924 his Will stated: "I do hereby authorize my daughter Mary Lee Whedon, if she shall deem it advisable, at any time, to purchase a lot in the Village of Medina, N.Y. and if she desires, to erect a building thereon for the purpose of a Public Library." This trust was by far Mr. Lee's most outstanding gift to his community. As a



WILLIAM U. LEE.

result, the first Lee-Whedon Memorial Library home was established in 1928 as part of the high school on Catherine Street in Medina. For many years Mrs. Whedon donated \$2500.00 annually toward the library's expenses. After Mrs. Whedon's death in 1950, some \$70,000 in trust was supervised by the Board of Education. In 1956 the Lee-Whedon trust was re-organized with its own Board of Trustees and separate budget with the school district as a tax base. Finally, in 1965, a building fund campaign was organized and a lot was purchased on West Avenue for a library. On June 11, 1967 the new building was dedicated, thus finally separating the Lee-Whedon Library facility from school premises.

Information in this article has been compiled from Medina Here's To Our Heritage by Edsel Grinnell 1996, Landmarks of Orleans County by Isaac Signor 1894, and The Medina Tribune Souvenir Edition June 1897.