

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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George Kennan, Explorer

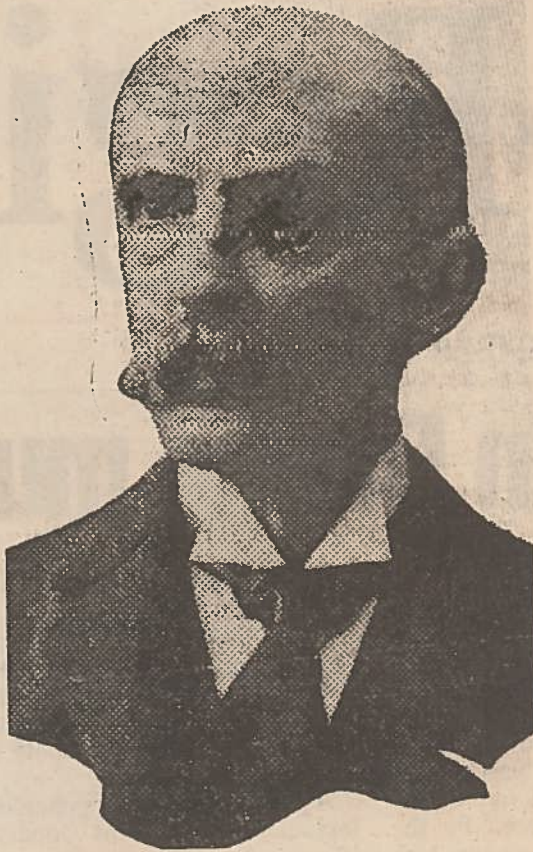
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Let me begin by stating that most of the information contained herein is taken from "Medina — Here's to Our Heritage" by E. W. Grinnell 1996.

George Kennan was born in Norwalk, Ohio, on Feb. 16, 1845. His father was a teacher, lawyer, Justice of the Peace and managed a Western Union Telegraph office at Norwalk. As a result of the latter interest, George learned to operate the telegraph at an early age.

When he was only 14 he accepted a position as a telegrapher in Cincinnati. Within a year's time he became the chief operator at age 15. Four years later, in 1864, he was hired by the Overland Telegraph Company to go to Russia to help construct a telegraph line across that country. From this experience he wrote a book entitled "Tent Life in Siberia" and likewise gained material for lectures. In the early 1870s he came to Medina and worked at the Union Bank as a cashier. His brother John was president of that institution at the time. George's interest in Russia had been captivated and while at the bank he greatly studied about the country. Because of this fascination, he made a second trip to Russia at his own expense. He studied there for over a year, learning about the people, legends, customs and history, thus obtaining more material for the lecture circuit. Upon returning to Medina he married Emaline (Lucy) Weld, daughter of John R. Weld, the miller.

In the early 1880s they moved to New York



where he freelanced as a writer and lecturer. After accepting a position with Associated Press, they moved to Washington, D. C.

In 1885 Century Magazine hired him to return to Russia to report on the Russian exile system in Siberia. He was accompanied by an artist over a two-year period which covered more than 25,000 miles by sea, rail, sleigh, wagon and horseback. His reports were printed in the Century Magazine. As a result of these unflattering articles, the Russians saw him as a troublemaker. In 1901 he and his wife were escorted out of the country when they returned for a trip.

In retirement they lived in Medina and, for a few years, he wrote articles for the *Medina Tribune*. Following two strokes he died on May 1, 1924. Emaline Kennan died in 1940. Both are buried in Boxwood Cemetery along with an only son who died in infancy.