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Bethinking of Old Orleans

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WILLIAM J. CURTIS 1906 - 1969

“With malice toward non, with charity for all,”

William “Bill” Curtis was the only son of Judson Coann Curtis and Elizabeth Dye Curtis. He graduated from Albion High School and Williams College. In 1932 he joined the staff of the Marine Midland Bank of Albion. His father’s interests were also in banking as he had been President of the Citizens National Bank in Albion until his death in 1931.

During World War II Mr. Curtis served with the U.S. Army Air Corps in the mid-west and European theater. Following this he resumed his duties at the Marine Bank of which he became Vice-President in 1955 until his retirement in 1968. Throughout his life time he was vitally interested in Scouting, being a district commissioner on the Lewiston Trail Council and on the Council executive board. In 1963 he was presented the Silver Beaver, Scouting’s highest adult recognition.

Mr. Curtis was also immensely interested in history and was an avid reader, researcher and authority on the Civil War. He occasionally vacationed in the South with his favorite sojourn being Williamsburg, Va. It is his library of 687 books on the Civil War which now comprises the collection in the Curtis Civil War Room which was dedicated in 1975 at the Swan Library.

The Curtis Rifle Range at Camp Dittmer, Phelps, N.Y. was endowed by his family with maintenance continued by him. Locally Mr. Curtis had many civic interests. He was a member of the First Presbyterian Church, Sheret Post #35 of the American Legion, Renovation Lodge No. 97 F & AM, B.P.O.E. Elks, Odd Fellows, the Town Club and the Dye Hose Co., of the Albion Fire Department. He was a quiet man, unassuming, yet frequently in the background, unnoticed, diligently helping others.

I presume none of this seems like it is too much out of the ordinary. But let me continue to elucidate. William J. Curtis beyond any doubt was Orleans County’s greatest philanthropist in our time. Yes, that’s right! He and his mother Elizabeth Dye Curtis have left to people of Orleans County a great legacy. If or you see, upon her death in 1956 she left a trust. When Bill Curtis died in 1969 he left his entire estate so it would be added to his mother’s trust. This then, according to plan, became known as the Curtis Foundation and is managed by Marine Trust Company. Interest from this trust is then used each year for educational and charitable purposes and is restricted for use in Orleans County. The Curtis Foundation has since its inception dispersed around \$20,000 annually to many various and worthy organizations within our county.

“Well done, good and faithful servant.”