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# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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### WILLIAM J. GALLAGHER 1880 - 1944

"To achieve what the world calls success a man must attend strictly to business and keep a little in advance of the times. The man who reaches the top is the one who is not content with doing just what is required of him. He does more." -- Edward H. Harriman

These words are surely true of William Joseph Gallagher of Medina for he was not only successful in one business but in many. Beyond a doubt, "He was quite a guy!" Born and brought up in Medina he attended the local schools there becoming a very popular and influential citizen.

In 1904 he was appointed mail carrier out of the Medina Post Office when the rural free delivery system was expanded. Two years later he resigned that position when he bought out the business known as the "Dime Delivery" from George Hall. Out of this he expanded his transfer or later trucking business into one of the largest in New York State. Someone once said to him when he was first starting out in this venture, "Bill, what you need is a d--- good bookkeeper". As the years went by, his successes grew which were in part based on good business management. He kept "a little in advance of the times" and was the first delivery service to use motor trucks beginning in 1913. The building pictured herein, now the offices of Garrick Insurance on North Main Street in Medina is where he operated from until around 1913 when he moved to Orient and East Center Streets. Note the sign above the door "W. Gallagher Moving Vans".

In 1921 he started in the road contracting business with Charles Ingersoll and their first project was the construction of the Medina-Middleport Road. Later he continued in business alone and built over 300 miles of improved highways in Western New York. Among those in this vicinity are Niagara Falls Boulevard, part of Route 18, the Batavia-Bethany Road, Medina-Lyndonville highway, Brockport Spencerport Road, Route 5 from Westfield to Erie, Pa. and all the cement streets in Medina were installed by his company at the time.

From an engineering and construction point of view his most important work was the completion of the bridge over Oak Orchard Creek on Route 18 at The Bridges. Another company had attempted the project but failed

due to quicksand in the creek bed. When Mr. Gallagher completed the 400 foot bridge in 1937 it was the largest single span in Western New York. One of his last construction jobs was a million dollar contract in 1942 building roads in the Lake Ontario Ordinance Plant at Model Town. In the Fall of 1943 he liquidated his trucking business together with his road building machinery. However, the trucking business continued on for a number of years under the Gallagher name.

In the mid-1920's Mr. Gallagher purchased a large farm on Gravel Road north of Medina almost across from Boxwood Cemetery. He became interested in livestock and was a very well known breeder of Belgian horses and Guernsey cattle. In May 1943 he disposed of his entire stock at an auction which attracted stockmen from all over the eastern United States. At the time of his death he still owned four large farms. For several years he was the owner of a stable of race horses which ran largely over Florida racetracks. As a winter visitor in Florida he also became interested in the development of real estate there. In 1939 he erected the Sir William Hotel in Miami which he owned and continued to operate the rest of his life.

William Gallagher was actively engaged in the Democratic Party politics and served for many years on the State Committee. He was a delegate to several National Conventions and was a trustee for several terms on the Medina Village Board. He was also an organizer of the Medina Trust Company and served as a member of its Board of Directors.

He was a Fourth degree Knights of Columbus, Elk and a member of the Holy Name Society of St. Mary's Church. He and his wife Beatrice built for their family the large yellow brick home with imposing green Spanish tile roof on West Center Street at the corner of Erie in Medina. Mr. Gallagher was a veteran of the Spanish American War and served with Co. F 3rd New York Infantry. In his will he left a former residence in Medina which for a time had been Van's Grill to the Lincoln Post 1483 V.F.W. That building which is located on East Center at Orient is known to this day as "The W.J. Gallagher and Son Memorial Veterans Club, Inc." So ends the story of one of Medina's shrewdest, most diversified and enterprising men, a high achiever who left accomplishments for his community.