

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## ALBERT L. SWETT 1850 - 1924

"Rebuffed, but always persevering; self-reproached, but ever regaining faith; undaunted, tenacious, the heart of man labors towards immeasurably distant goals."

If one were to name Medina's most visionary, influential, industrious and illustrious citizen of the past one hundred fifty years it would probably be none other than Albert Louis Swett. At the time of his death he was Medina's richest man and the most potent single factor in developing industrial resources. It was through his foresight and ability that electric generation was first produced in Medina for lighting and manufacturing purposes on a large scale.

A. L. Swett was born on the Swett Road northeast of Medina but spent his early childhood on the Bates Road and later in the township of Royalton. In 1856 he accompanied his grandfather to Illinois where he spent nine years on a farm which his parents had purchased. During the Civil War, his father and brother Joel were in the army which left much of the farm work to young Albert.

In 1865, he returned with his family back to Medina where for several months he worked in the store of E & T Swan. He then secured a position in Lina Belcher's printing office for a short while until he accepted a position in the store of H. O. Bates. His higher education was completed at the Medina Academy.

Following his studies he went to work for the Bignal Company which must have greatly inspired his motives to become a leading industrialist. For in 1873 he formed a co-partnership with W. H. Sampson and began manufacturing hardware specialties under the name of Sampson and Swett. Each partner furnished \$1200 which they had saved from their previous earnings. In 1889 he became the sole owner and the firm was known as the A. L. Swett Iron Works.

In 1898 he sold the soil pipe and fittings branch of this business to the Central Foundry Company of N.Y. City of which he was a director. Following this sale he then built a new foundry which increased and expanded his business to more than what he had formerly done by the whole concern.

Aside from his foundry business Mr. Swett had many private interests by which some of his greatest achievements came about. In 1898 he also formed the A. L. Swett Electric Light and Power Company which was changed to the Western New York Utilities Company in 1916. It was through his efforts that two electric reservoirs were created. The first was Glenwood Lake north of Medina and the second was Lake Alice at Waterport.

A. L. Swett's home at the corner of Eagle Street and Prospect Avenue was the first residence in Medina to have electric lights installed.

In January of 1923 Mr. Swett disposed of his interests in the power company to give to efforts of his retiring years and his family as well as civic projects. These were however, cut short by an automobile accident from which he never recovered. He was survived by his wife, Lucinda Fuller, whom he had married in 1872 and two sons Charles S. Swett and Raymond F. Swett.

Continuing next week will be the first part of a two part story about the A. L. Swett Electric Light and Power Co.

Helen Keller