

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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L. Monacelli photo/copy  
WILLIAM BAKER 1863-1954

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"Printing is a good business. It is clean, honorable, respectable. It is celebrated as a trainer of men for higher stations in life. It has many inspiring traditions and legends. It combines the need for knowledge of everything under the sun: mathematics, mechanics, language, spelling, grammar, color, composition, salesmanship; there is indeed no limit to the accomplishments that are required of the printer. The printer is brought into the contract with all other vocations and professions. No vocation or profession can really exist without the printing press. From text books to novels, from pamphlets to newspapers, from tickets to tax bills, no man can evade the printed word." Henry P. Rorter.

When William "Billy" Baker of Medina died at age 91 he was the oldest active printer in the State of New York and the fourth oldest in the nation. He began at 16 in 1881 when he set his first type with the Frank Hurd on the old Medina Tribune. At that time the Tribune was published upstairs in the building now occupied by the J.C. Penney Co. He was required to set about two and one-half columns of hand type daily. In February of 1903 he and David Benson started a new daily newspaper in Medina called the Medina Daily Journal. By doing this William Baker became one of the founders of the present Journal-Register. He and David Benson had canvassed the Knowlesville - Ridgeway - Lyndonville - Shelby area and sold 800 subscriptions in advance for \$1.00 for six months or \$2.00 a year. Presses were purchased from the Brockport Republic and their venture became Benson's dream come true. However, misunderstandings occurred between the two men which resulted in the dissolving of the partnership around 1905 when William Baker sold out, going back to the job-printing business. Meanwhile David Benson took in Charles Newton Hood and Milton J. Whedon as partners and shortly thereafter moved from an East Center Street address to the present location where they bought out the Medina Register on North Main Street.

Following this, Mr. Baker worked in Buffalo for the Christian Advocate, and then later for several years on the Orleans American at Albion under the editorship of Gerald Simpson. From there he went back to the Medina Journal when it was operated by John W. Hinchey, who later took in Alonzo Waters as his partner. But a few years later Mr. Baker and his son Roy got back into the job printing business for themselves and located at 127 East Center Street.

He had married Elizabeth Greaserl in 1902 who was his chief helpmate in his printing ventures before her death. Speaking of her fondly he once said, "She was an all around printer, and she knew the trade as well as most men." Upon his death he was completing seventy-three years as a printer who had had countless thousands of contracts with people from every vocation and profession in the Medina area.