

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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THE LADY OF THE LAKE
"ALICE"

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"So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee"

-- Shakespeare

Portrayed here in an elegant gown around sixty years ago is Alice Swett of Medina for whom Lake Alice was named at Waterport. Alice Swett Dayton (1909-1983) was the daughter of Charles S. (1879-1952) and Anna Brooks Swett and the granddaughter of Albert L. Swett (1850-1924). The Swetts were a prominent and well-to-do family of Medina identified with the foundry industry and hydro electric interests. It was Albert L. Swett who was one of the first enterprising business men of the area to start generating electric power as early as 1888. In 1898 he incorporated under the name A. L. Swett Electric Light and Power Co. In 1903 this company built a storage dam across Oak Orchard Creek north of Medina to generate electric power which is known as Glenwood Lake. At the time this construction took place Charles S. Swett became associated with his father in the A. L. Swett Electric Light and Power Co. He had already been involved in his father's foundry business, the A. L. Swett Iron Works, as a sales representative.

Later the name of the Power Company was changed to the Western New York Utilities Co. It was this company which in 1917 decided to create another power dam farther down Oak Orchard Creek at Waterport. Over fifty pieces of property were purchased to create this power dam reservoir which extended upstream four and one-half miles. The dam which was made of concrete and earth is eighty-one feet high which indicates the channel depth of the reservoir. Aside from building the dam, many buildings were moved and a new Main Street bridge in Waterport was constructed for \$70,000. The entire project was completed in August 1920. Alice Swett was then eleven years old and surely the pride and joy of not only her father Charles who was president of the Western N.Y. Utilities Company at the time but also her grandfather, Albert, its founder. It is easy to understand how this man-made body of water was named in honor of Alice Swett.

In 1923 the Western N.Y. Utilities Co. was sold to Boston interests and the name was changed to the Niagara-Lockport & Ontario Power Co. It is now part of the Niagara Mohawk System. Despite the changing nomenclature of power companies, the name Lake Alice remains today as testimony of a father's love for his daughter.

"O fair! O sweet! when I do look on thee,
In whom all joys so well agree,
Heart and soul do sing in me."

-- Sir Philip Sidney