

[Lee, John Clarence]

Dr. John Clarence Lee S.L.U. Head 1896-99  
DIES AT CAMBRIDGE, MASS., AFTER LONG ILLNESS  
Was Son of John Stebbins Lee, First President of St. Lawrence—  
Had a Long and Notable Career as Educator and Clergyman

A telegram received late Monday afternoon at the office of the secretary of St. Lawrence University from Mrs. Florence Lee Whitman announced the death during the day at her home, 23 Everett Street, Cambridge, Mass., of her brother, the Rev. John Clarence Lee, retired clergyman, and former president of St. Lawrence University. Dr. Lee had been in ill health for some years. He was 84 years old.

John Clarence Lee was born in South Woodstock, Vt., Oct. 15, 1856, the son of John Stebbins Lee and Elmina (Bennett) Lee. His father at that time was principal of the Green Mountain Liberal Institute, at South Woodstock, Vt. Three years later, in 1859, Mr. Lee, as he then was, was called to Canton to organize and preside over the newly established St. Lawrence University. Accompanied by Mrs. Lee and two small boys, one of them John Clarence, and the other his older brother, Leslie Alexander, Mr. Lee arrived in Canton April 5, 1859.

John Clarence Lee grew up in Canton, attended the village schools, and in time entered St. Lawrence University with the class of 1876. He was active not only in his studies but in the somewhat limited range of the college activities of the time. He was secretary of his class, treasurer of the Thelomathesian, and its vice president, organizer and manager of the first Field Day, the first attempt at organized athletic activities at St. Lawrence. He was not only the organizer and manager, but he was a contestant also. He won the mile run and in his later years remarked that when after twenty years his record had not been beaten he felt some real satisfaction.

Graduating in the class of 1876, with Ledyard P. Hale, Eddy Howard Bugbee, Charles Kelsey Gaines, Clara Weaver, afterward Mrs. Nelson Lemuel Robinson, and Inez Ardie Jones, Mr. Lee for a year taught at Dean Academy. In 1877 he entered Harvard College, graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1878. He returned to Canton to enter the Theological School, and also to be introducer of football at St. Lawrence. The game was Rugby, which he had seen at Harvard. He brought with him a copy of the rules, and by his enthusiasm was enabled to organize a football team. That copy of the rules is now one of the treasured items in the University Museum. He graduated in divinity in 1880 and served the parish at Perry for three years. Mr. Lee was called to St. Albans, Vt., where he served from 1883 to 1884. In 1884 he joined the faculty of Lombard College, Galesburg, Ill., and until 1896 served variously as teacher, vice-president, and president.

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In 1896 he was called as president to his alma mater, where he remained until 1899. During this period the Gymnasium, which stood where the Gunnison Chapel now is, was built, new laboratories for physics and chemistry were constructed, a collection of minerals was acquired, the endowment was increased and the student body was augmented and drawn from a larger field. From the presidency of St. Lawrence Dr. Lee, for the degree of Ph.D. was conferred by Harvard in 1895, went to Philadelphia, Pa., as pastor of the large and important Church of the Restoration. Here he remained for over twenty years.

In his later years he was pastor of the church at Gloucester, Mass., and at Stamford, Conn. Wherever Dr. Lee was located he took a large part in civic and social activities. In Philadelphia he was a member of the Society of Arts and Letters, the Union League Club, the City Club, the Liberal Club, the Federation of Religious Liberals. In college he was a member of the Beta Theta Pi and Phi Beta Kappa.

As years came upon him he lessened his activities, and for some ten years he had lived in retirement at Stamford, Conn. He traveled abroad, and on one occasion he and Mrs. Lee journeyed to Tasmania to visit a daughter married and living in that far-off land.

In 1889 Dr. Lee married, in Hyde Park, Mass., Helena Crummett, who will be remembered in Canton. Mrs. Lee survives, with their children, two sons and three daughters.

Dr. Lee's life was divided between teaching and pastoral work. At Lombard, in addition to executive duties he was professor of English literature and Rhetoric, and of Biblical Interpretation and Homiletics. At St. Lawrence he was likewise professor of English Literature. In 1896 Tufts College conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology.

Funeral arrangements are not known.

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