

[Lee, John Stebbins]

JOHN STEBBINS LEE

CANTON, N.Y., Sept. 19.—John Stebbins Lee, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Church History, and the first President of St. Lawrence University, died this morning, aged 82 years. He was graduated from Amherst College in the class of 1845. He was the oldest educator in the Universalist denomination, having been connected with denominational schools and colleges for fifty-seven years. He was a large contributor to denominational papers, and the author of "Nature and Art in the Old World" and "Sacred Critics." A son, F. S. Lee, is Professor of Physiology in Columbia University; another son, the Rev. J. Lawrence, an ex-President of St. Lawrence, is the pastor of the Church of the Restoration in Philadelphia, and a third, Leslie A., is Professor of Biology and Geology at Bowdoin College, Maine. The funeral will be held on Sunday afternoon.

New York Times, New York NY, Sat. 20 Sep 1902

JOHN STEBBINS LEE, D.D., L.L.D.

The death of Dr. Lee took place at his residence in this village on Thursday evening September 18th.

Though he had been in somewhat feeble condition for some months he was in tolerable health until attacked by grip to which he succumbed after an illness of some two weeks, at an age wanting but five days of eighty-two years. He was born in Vernon, Vt., Sept. 23d, 1820; a farmer's son, he was persistently fond of reading and study, and by arduous efforts of his own and the sacrifices of his parents fitted for college in the academies of this region and entered Amherst college in July, 1841, graduating with high honors in the class of 1845. He immediately became principal of Mt. Caesar Seminary, of Swansey, N.H., where he remained for two years. During this time also he pursued the study of Universalist theology under the direction of Dr. Hosea Ballou, 2d. On June 23d, 1847, he was ordained to the Universalist ministry in West Brattleboro, Vt., and settled as pastor of the parish there. With characteristic energy he undertook the double task of the pastorate and principalship of Melrose Seminary, located in the same town. While there he married on Feb. 22d, 1848, Miss Elmina Bennett, of Westmoreland, N.H.

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In 1849 he removed to Lebanon, N. H., where he repeated his former experience by becoming principal of Lebanon Liberal Institute and pastor of the village parish. In 1851 he removed to Montpelier, Vt., and became assistant editor of the Christian Repository. In March, 1852 he was elected principal of Green Mountain Liberal Institute, of South Woodstock, Vt. Here he remained for five years, serving as usual as pastor of the church. Worn out by the double burden, he resigned, removed to Woodstock and served as pastor for two years.

He came to Canton in 1859, elected by the trustees of the new university as Prof. of Latin and Greek, and designated as acting president. For nine years, until 1868, he acted as president, and carried, sometimes almost without classroom assistance the heavy burden of superintendence and instruction in the young institution. He also traversed the whole region in the interest of education and religion. After a week of incessant effort he harnessed his horse and went even to the remotest portions of the county. There was scarcely a hamlet where he was not a familiar figure. He began that constant ministry of which his twenty-seven years of service at Edwards is an illustration. He founded the St. Lawrence County Teachers' Association, was its first, and for more than twenty years its sole president, and probably has rendered more efficient service than any other teacher in the county to the cause of higher learning. In July 1868, almost prostrated by his tireless activities and their burdens, he obtained [a] leave of absence and fulfilled his long cherished wish and plan of a journey through Europe to the Holy Land. On his return he was elected to the professorship of Ecclesiastical History and Biblical Archæology, and remained in that position—a period of thirty-three years—until his death.

He became a sort of missionary bishop, a constant preacher, a minister of Consolation in such acceptance that he became beloved in hundreds of bereaved homes. He wrote two volumes based upon the experiences of his travels, contributed to newspapers and other periodicals, lectured often upon his travels and in the interests of temperance. A great reader, he collected a library of more than 4,000 volumes, and in the midst of his books and papers has lived for a few years a very quiet life. He received the honorary degree of A.M. from his Alma Mater, that of D.D. from Buchtel College in 1875, that of L.L.D. from Tufts College in 1901.

Mrs. Lee is a woman of culture and refinement, and their wedded life of fifty-four years was one of mutual love and generous toil for the highest ends of society and the home. Six children were born to them: the oldest, Ida Elmina, died in infancy; the others, Leslie A., John Clarence, Frederic S., Florence J. Gertrude L., grew to maturity, were all graduated from St. Lawrence University, have all been at some time teachers, and achieved some special success in science or art.

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The funeral services were held on the afternoon of Sunday, Sept. 21st, and a great throng assembled in the Universalist church for the last public rites. Addresses were made by Drs. [James M.] Payson, Weaver, [Almon] Gunnison and [Orello] Cone, in which just recognition was made of the sterling virtues and valuable services of this eminent educator and fellow townsman whose long residence in Canton bore rich fruitage unto our whole community. The burial was in Evergreen Cemetery.

Commercial Advertiser, Canton NY, Wed 24 Sep 1902

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