

[Gaines, Charles Kelsey]

CHARLES K. GAINES, POET, AUTHOR, TEACHER

Funeral Services Being Held From Gunnison Memorial Chapel This Afternoon  
A Man Whose Life Had Been Devoted to St. Lawrence  
University And to Canton. Was Loved By All.

There is a stillness in the study on the second floor at 20 Pine Street.

The familiar form no longer sits rocking in the large chair. No hand reaches out for the pen or pencil resting in the grooves of the writing tablet on the chair's arm. Books on the shelves are untouched. The box of cigars remains unopened and the briar pipe unfilled. The green shaded lamp on the old oak table is dimmed out.

For Dr. Charles Kelsey Gaines, beloved teacher and professor emeritus of St. Lawrence University, that Grand Old Man who personified the St. Lawrence Spirit to so many Laurentians and who had brought honor and distinction to this community and to the University, is dead. Death, for him, was a welcome visitor. He had waited patiently and long for its call. It beckoned him to cross the threshold, into that other room where he and his beloved wife, Cammie, might again be united.

Funeral services are in progress at Gunnison Memorial Chapel beginning at 2:30 this afternoon. Dr. John Murray Atwood, colleague and former pupil, will conduct the service, with Dr. Gaines' pastor, Rev. Hugh S. Tigner of the Universalist Church. Burial will be in Evergreen Cemetery. It was most fitting on "The Hill," where he spent so many years, and in the chapel dedicated in the name of Dr. Almon Gunnison, the one man, who more than any other, had influenced the family to settle here over seventy years ago.

Much can be written of Dr. Gaines, and the Gaines family, for they have meant so much to Canton and to St. Lawrence. From that distant date, in 1869, when Washington W. Wheelock, clerk of the parish of the Canton Universalist church, first wrote Rev. Absalom Graves Gaines that the pastorate of the Canton society was open, and would he take charge, the Gaines family has been thoroughly Cantonian.

Charles Kelsey Gaines was only a lad of fifteen when his parents, Rev. Absalom Graves Gaines and Emma Clara Hurd Gaines, brought him to Canton in March, 1870. The date of his birth was October 21, 1854 and the place of that event was in the farm house of his grandfather, David Hurd, at Royalston [Royalton], Niagara County, N.Y. His childhood had been spent mostly in Maine. His father, who was a graduate of the University of Virginia, and of the Tufts College divinity course, was a Universalist clergyman whose scholarly traits were attracting attention throughout the Universalist denomination.

Young Charles Gaines lived for twelve years in the Pine Tree state, six years at Bethel, six more at Mechanics Falls, in both of which places the Rev. Gaines held pastorates. In his early youth this lad possessed precocious traits. Apparently he lacked none of those boyish interests in sports, and outdoor life, but he was an avid student, and displayed a keen interest and knowledge in

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mechanical things as well. But he was not a prodigy. He entered St. Lawrence University at eighteen. His father, who had devoted two successive years as pastor of the Canton Universalist church, had been elected President of St. Lawrence University in 1872, a post he held until retiring, due to failing health, in 1888.

College life, and the opportunities it offered, not only for one who was zestful in search of knowledge, but to service as well, cast its spell over Charles Gaines. He was of it. Time never diminished that love for St. Lawrence which those formative years wrought. That love lived with him, through all the years, through all his successes and achievements.

Charles K. Gaines always possessed a great admiration for the Class of 1876 at the University, and well he might. It totaled only thirteen members at entrance, but it was the largest class to matriculate up to that time. Eleven of the thirteen completed their course. It was a group which contributed much to the University. Dr. Gaines always contended that the "St. Lawrence Spirit" was born during his college days. If so, he had much to do with it. He with others established the first Greek fraternity, Alpha Sigma Chi, on the campus. This chapter later became affiliated with Beta Theta Pi; with others he helped organize and establish the first of the annual Tree Holidays, the students noting the need for more shade and landscaping on that "slight eminence" now known as University Heights; with others he organized the first Field Day and Athletica, forerunner of the present athletic organization at the University. It was he who with others selected the college colors, the Scarlet and the Brown, John Clarence Lee, a classmate, being the one who first suggested the colors. In his senior year he served as president of the student body, The Thelomathesian.

[On] June 22, 1876 he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and immediately joined the college faculty, for he had unusual scholastic ability, and even so early in life was advanced in the study of English and Greek. In 1879 St. Lawrence conferred the degree of Master of Arts upon him.

St. Lawrence University was a small and struggling institution in those days, but its student body and faculty lacked nothing in eagerness and determination. Salaries were meager and the condition of the University's treasury often precarious, but that was incidental to the opportunities which service under its banner offered. There were boys and girls in this North Country who eagerly made great sacrifices in order to obtain a college education. They were undaunted and so was the faculty.

Charles K. Gaines began teaching as a tutor in Greek. The classics then stood first on the curriculum. Those were subjects dear to his heart. In 1877 he was advanced to Professor of Greek Language and Literature. He was a master in that subject, and became recognized as one of the finest and ablest Greek scholars and teachers in this country. His historical novel "Gorgo," a Romance of Old Athens, was referred to by Lord Bryce of England as the best of its kind in that field.

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With the University in its still formative stage there was opportunity and latitude for one's creative talents and Charles K. Gaines did not lack in either initiative or talent. In addition to Greek he undertook teaching English Literature and Parliamentary Law, introducing in both of these courses methods that were entirely new at the time. Students found him an inspiring teacher. St. Lawrence became widely known for the excellence of its students. One thing was assured, whenever one of his "Par Law" students was called upon to preside over meetings in after life, they knew the procedure and rules by which such gatherings were correctly governed, something very few people are able to do with ability. As a consequence, they attracted attention and many of them became community leaders.

It was a busy life on "The Hill." There was much to do in and out of the classroom. The young professor was never hesitant about taking on new loads. He added the History of International Law to his courses, served several years as college librarian, and was secretary of the faculty for two different periods. There was not a college publication which started during his time (and they all did) which did not have his assistance and oversight. He helped with the first yearbook, *The Gridiron*, published in 1880; he was the advisor for Williston Manley and Frank Yale Adams when they established *The Laurentian* in 1888; he became the editor of all college catalogs and brochures; it was to him that Harry B. Adsit, Harry F. Landon, John Erickson, Homer Vilas and William Trench turned when they established *The Hill News* in 1912; Dr. Gaines supervised and did most of the editorial work on "Sixty Years of St. Lawrence." These were but a few of the tasks he undertook as part of his "extra-curricular activities" while a faculty member. In its catalog and in publications, all of which came under his guidance, there was only one standard which was acceptable to him. That was perfection in writing, in expression, in grammar and in punctuation.

When the existence of the University hung in the financial balance in 1886, and his father was making heroic efforts to raise funds to save it, it was Charles Kelsey Gaines' song, "The Scarlet and the Brown" which kindled and touched off the burst of enthusiasm in a Canton rally to save the day.

Following his father's resignation as president in 1888, the next few years became increasingly arduous and demanding. There had always been the desire for further study, a chance to visit foreign lands, those countries from which the classics stemmed. So in 1892-3 he took time out and traveled extensively in England, Italy, Greece, and Egypt. Not long after his return, one of his former scholars and dearest friends, Addison Irving Bacheller, founder of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity at St. Lawrence, and then rising young author, invited him to become vice-president of the newly organized Bacheller Newspaper Syndicate in New York. That enterprise was the forerunner of the present-day newspaper syndicates. The work proved interesting, but Charles Gaines was born to teaching. That profession would not and could not spare him nor he it. So in 1900, after five busy years in the city, he returned once

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more to his beloved St. Lawrence University, there to live out his life in ever-useful service.

Dr. Almond Gunnison, life-long friend of the Gaines family, the man who more than any other had personally influenced Dr. Absalom Graves Gaines first to come to Canton, had in 1899 accepted the presidency of St. Lawrence. It was he who urged Charles K. Gaines to resume his post on the faculty. In February 1900 Dr. Gaines was again back in his classroom in the old college building, and for the next thirty years was to be seen daily during the college year, walking briskly along Park street and up College Hill, a brief case in his left hand, his right arm swinging with military precision as he hurried to meet his class.

More and busier years lay ahead upon his return. He had already begun work on writing "Gorgo." In 1903 this novel came from the presses. The book held great promise. The reviews were most encouraging, and then suddenly the Lothrop Company, the publishers, failed and the sales ceased as the publishing rights at once became involved as part of the assets of the company's creditors. It was a serious and heavy blow to the author, but with characteristic cheer and fortitude he did not let it change the even tenor of his life.

There were his students and college to work for. The new family home on Pine street, one of the finest in this village, was completed in 1904. In 1911 he completed and published an "Authorized Revision of Cushman's Manual of Parliamentary Law." Upon Dr. Gunnison's resignation and retirement in 1913, he and his colleagues, Dean E. L. Hulett and Dr. George R. Hardie were assigned by the Trustees to bridge the gap in the interregnum until a new president was secured. He served as chairman of this committee of administrators during 1914-1915. During 1915 much of his time was devoted to editing "Sixty Years of St. Lawrence." In 1917 the University honored him with the degree of Doctor of Laws. In 1892 Lombard College had conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. From 1922 to 1924 he served as chairman of the Library Board at the University. He was granted a sabbatical leave for the year 1923-24 and spent it with Irving Bacheller at Winter Park, Florida. In 1926 he published his book of poems, "Echoes of Many Moons."

Then, though having the allotted three score years and ten, he had not lost his full vigor, though he had relinquished some of his duties, such as faculty supervisor of The Laurentian and Hill News. In 1929, upon the visit of Madame Curie to the campus he wrote on of his most beautiful and notable poems. In 1931, at the age of 77, he became professor emeritus and retired from active classroom teaching, though as recently as 1940 he was still enjoying his profession, having had Richard Young, son of a former student, Owen D. Young, as a special student of Greek at his home during that young man's four years at St. Lawrence.

But the sun was setting. Daily he maintained his customary routine of hours at his home, living largely in his study, surrounded by the shelves of books from

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which he had and still studied the classics, reading the best in literature, keeping step with the news of the day, smoking a friendly pipe or cigar with a visiting friend, or happily greeting students of the present St. Lawrence who found in him a never-ending source of inspiration and joy. Fortunately he retained his faculties, with all their keenness, to the very last. In recent months his eyesight had failed, but his spirit remained undimmed and undaunted to the last.

His last years were saddened by the loss of his wife. Among those who attended St. Lawrence during his undergraduate days was Cabellina Pendleton Woods, daughter of a Universalist family in Ohio, who had transferred to St. Lawrence from Buchtel College, Akron, Ohio. She was a woman of magnetic charm, of rare wit and intellect. She became known to all her friends, and in fact to all Laurentians and Cantonians, as Cammie. An unusually interesting conversationalist, a scholar as well, she and Dr. Gaines were a most happy and interesting couple. There was life and vivacity in their home. It was the mecca for students from one college generation to another. She and others had formed the Browning Society while she was in college. This became the local chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma. She and Dr. Gaines were married July 2, 1878, only a few days after her graduation from St. Lawrence. Her death [on] September 17, 1928 took something from his life never to be replaced. From then until a year ago his annual Christmas greeting was always in verse, and in memory of her.

Their only son, Professor Clarence Hurd Gaines, is now head of the Department of English at the University, the family tradition having come down through three generations.

Dr. Gaines was an exceedingly modest man, but a man of the strongest convictions. His most vital weapon was his pen. When the World War came in 1914 and from then until 1918 when it ceased, he wrote many stanzas which were notable for their patriotism. He was an ardent and life-long Republican. One of his greatest interests was the Beta Theta Pi fraternity, which he had served as a national officer. He was one of the six founders of its St. Lawrence Chapter. A beautiful oil portrait of Dr. Gaines now hangs in the Young-Abbott Memorial Temple on the campus. He became a member of Phi Beta Kappa in 1899 when that honorary scholastic fraternity established a chapter at St. Lawrence and later served as vice-president and then as president of the local chapter.

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Transcribed on 11 Jun 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY