



# Orleans County Historical Association

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# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Miss Helen Gillmeister  
937 Gwinn Street  
Medina, New York

Miss Gillmeister, former librarian, tells of the  
Lee-Whedon Public Library.

This interview was conducted, transcribed and edited  
by Mrs. Helen McAllister, Medina, N.Y.



Miss Helen Gillmeister



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Helen R. Gilmeister

Signed

April 25, 1985

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. M. A. [Signature]

INTERVIEWER

4-25-1985

Date

Gill I was born in Medina, the only child of Herman and Fredericka Gillmeister. They were both born in this country of German ancestry. My mother was born near Olcott, and my father was born in Shelby Basin. My mother's parents came from Germany as a young married couple with three little boys, and settled on a farm near Olcott. Their names were William and Mary Volschow. My mother's brother, Charles Volschow, had a men's clothing store here in Medina in the early 1900's. Later he sold the business and opened a store in Lockport. My father's parents came from Germany as young people and they settled in Wolcottsville. My father was a coal dealer, and he sold automatic stokers. He had originally worked in the Medina Central Foundry and was for some years superintendent of Butts and Slack Foundry. I was raised here in Medina, of course, and went to the schools here. I went to Cornell University where I majored in French. I taught French at the beginning of my career. I went to Columbia University to summer school and got my degree in library service and became a librarian.

Medina never had a public library until William U. Lee came along. He was a well-to-do apple grower. Upon his death in 1926, he left his estate to his daughter, Mrs. Mary Lee Whedon, with the provision that at her death the money was to be used to buy property and erect a public library for Medina. I never knew Mrs. Whedon until my association with the library because I was at college when all this was going on, but I would like to tell you a little bit of the kind of person I thought she was.

She was small, very correct in her manners, soft spoken, gentle, cultured, and public spirited. Her chief pleasure was vacationing at the Chautauqua Institute every summer. This Institute is a cultural center, south of Medina, near Pennsylvania. Each summer they present concerts, plays and lectures ... many by nationally known figures. The Institute's grounds are private and there are houses on the grounds where people may stay and spend their vacations.

Mrs. Whedon did not want Medina to wait for her to die before it had a public library, and besides, real estate values had changed a great deal in the 1920's. It was found that there

probably would not be enough money to buy property, build a library, and then keep it going. So, Mrs. Whedon consulted with the Board of Education and as a result, they went to court and really broke the will. Arrangements were made for the library to be established in the High School Building (then located on Catherine Street). The library was established in 1928 under the direction of the Board of Education. Mrs. Whedon gave money from her income to the support; the Board of Education also furnished money and hired and paid the librarian.

The new library was in the present High School building, first room on the right, just inside the front entrance. The size of the room was probably about 24' by 24'. There was a large circular desk which was much bigger than it needed to be but was very convenient because you could do so much work there. Behind the desk there were, I think, four stacks between the desk and the windows; perpendicular to the windows. There was shelving against the walls on the north and the east, and the school library was next door with a door between the two libraries. There were several tables and chairs. There were no children's books, just a small collection of adult books. The library was open for use Monday thru Saturday in the afternoon, and Monday thru Friday in the evening.

The first librarian was Miss Grace Rugg. She had originally taught Latin and higher mathematics in the High School. She was also the High School librarian, but the High School library didn't amount to very much. It had very few books. It was never open except when she wanted to let you have a book, because she was "busy"! She was a slightly plump, elderly, pleasant person and when she became the Lee-Whedon librarian she loved the library. It was her pet, her pride and joy! Finally she was forced to retire because of her age; and she did not want to retire. Her age was 70, I believe. When I came to talk to her a few times, because I had been hired to take over from her, she was quite apprehensive about my taking over. I had been a former pupil, I was brand new, and I might have revolutionary ideas! And, her library ought to stay just the way it was.

I came to Medina as the Lee-Whedon librarian in 1934, September. My salary was \$1,675. This was normal. The maximum salary

at that time was not too much over \$2,200. I guess some teachers got more than that, but never much more than \$2,500. Howard Brown was the Superintendent when I came here. He was here only one year after I came and then Arthur Trippensee became the Superintendent.

Mrs. Whedon had to approve of me before I could be hired because the Board was careful to do everything that Mrs. Whedon approved of and wanted since she was the one who had furnished the money to get the library started. I was told also, when I came, that we must please Mrs. Whedon in the policies and the book selection. So, I was in the library afternoons, and in the mornings I taught or was in the school library.

When I came to the library, the book stacks behind the desk were dark. You could not see what was on the shelves. There was no light over them, and I complained. Finally a light was installed, but it was a hanging, single bulb with no shade! It did furnish light and that was all you could say for it. Against the south wall were many bound volumes of old periodicals, just to fill up space. I think somebody had given them. The collection of books, of course, was quite small. As I said before, Mrs. Whedon had high moral values and we had to be careful of the kind of books we bought. She would have been horrified at the kind of books which are published these days!

I want to talk about our book purchases. The Rochester News Service sent a man each month who came to the library, in his own car, with a big collection of books: boxes of books which he brought into the library. He and I would go over them and decide which ones, maybe, the library might like to have. He would leave those books with us and then, at the end of the month when he came again, he would take back the ones we didn't want and leave some more. I would also give him a book order if he didn't have the ones that I thought we wanted. The Rochester News Service is now the Manson News, and I believe still services the stores in Medina which have paperback books. They eventually had a large paperback collection.

Mc Was this before the time of paperback books?

Gill Yes, there were no paperback at that time. They came later, I can't remember just when. You have asked about book censorship.

I was fresh out of library school. I had taken a course in adult book buying for public libraries. I was taking the New York Times (newspaper) and I read the book reviews thoroughly. I saw that John O'Hara's Appointment in Samara was a best seller and I decided perhaps we should have it in the library. So, I said something to this man (I'm sorry, I can't think of his name) and he said, "Oh you don't want that book! Mrs. Whedon wouldn't approve of that!" So, we did not buy it.

I think it is interesting to note that at that time, the cost of books was a little different from today. Light love stories and mysteries cost \$2.00 per book; more serious novels cost \$3.00. Non-fiction was apt to cost a little more than that but not much. The man who had brought us our books eventually died. I had so much enjoyed the service we got that I started going into Rochester to the Rochester News myself, usually once a month, and doing the same thing - picking out the things that I thought we could use and bringing them home and then leaving orders to be filled later.

Mc Didn't the Rochester News Service replace this man?

Gill No, they didn't. I suppose the Depression had something to do with that. Also, there had not been any children's books in the public library, but there were some magazines. I began to buy children's books. The Children's Corner, as we called it, was put in the north east corner of the room. I bought some counter height shelving to be put around this so that it could be a children's corner. We bought a small table and some chairs for them so that we could service the whole community.

Now I want to talk about something else that was going on during that early Depression time. There was a Collegiate Center set up in Medina which I think started my first year in Medina. (1934 ? ) It lasted several years and its purpose was to permit students who could not afford to go to college (because of the Depression) to get some college courses for which they could receive college credit. This was a federally funded project. It was supervised by Alfred University and the faculty was comprised of college teachers who had not been able to get jobs. This Collegiate Center was located in the High School building. The courses were usually given at night and, of course, the library was involved to a certain extent. But we did not have the resource for these people, so as a result, a librarian was hired to take

care of them. The librarian hired was Gladys Beach, a local girl, college educated, who also had not been able to find a job. They used the school library evenings for their library and books were furnished for them. I'm not sure where those books came from. There were quite a few people who took courses and did get college credit for them.

At the end of my first year in Medina, I think the Board of Education felt they were not getting their money's worth out of me. Our book collection was small and the library was not being used as much as it should have been. I think that was partly because it was in the High School building and that some people were a little intimidated by that. Many people came in the evening when they knew there was no school. It was not busy in the afternoons and, as I say, I think the Board of Education felt that it was not getting its money's worth out of me, so I was put at teaching half day, and in the school library half a day. Gladys Beach was then hired to work in the Lee-Whedon Library afternoons. I was still considered the titular head of the library because the state required a certified librarian to be in charge of the library. Gladys was not library trained. I still had a lot of responsibility. I still selected and purchased the books and I helped to form the policies. I helped take the inventory every year and I made out the annual state report. The kind of information that was required on that was a printed form. They had to know the size of the library, the size of the staff, the circulation for the year, the number of titles and volumes in each classification, special strengths and weaknesses, and probably other things which I've forgotten.

During this time of the Great Depression, Mrs. Whedon was forced to cut down on her financial support to the library. She had to give up her Chautauqua trips every summer, and I felt awful about that because she loved it so. She still felt she needed to support the library over and above her particular pleasure in going to Chautauqua. She finally had to completely give up her contributions. I believe that was 1939; then the Village appropriated \$1,500. a year toward the support of the Lee-Whedon Library.

Gladys Beach worked several years in the library. She had one year off in which she traveled around the world as a companion to an older woman, and Henrietta Garrett took her place. Gladys



came back at the end of the year and stayed until 1940. I remember one summer when she was the librarian and I was still considered the head librarian; it was decided that the library needed to be painted. Naturally the library books all had to be removed in order for the painting to be done. Gladys and I moved all the books to a storeroom down the hall from the school library. We washed all the shelves, then when everything was done, we brought all the books back and put them in their proper places on the shelves. Naturally, we were pretty exhausted, and we finally confessed to each other that we had been taking mystery stories home to read at night to relax ourselves. I am still a fan of the mystery stories. There had been many bound periodicals in the library and we "forgot" to take a lot of those back when we moved the books back because we felt that they were a deadening influence on the library.

When Gladys left to be married in 1940, Miss Flora Webb became the librarian with me still as titular head because Flora had not had the library training. I still went to the Rochester News to pick up new books but I asked Flora to go with me and she helped in the selection.

World War II came along with gasoline rationing. Each person who had a car was issued gasoline coupons each month. I've forgotten, but it seems as if it was something like five gallons a week that you were allowed, so, you didn't take too many unauthorized trips! I found that I could get special dispensation and get extra gasoline because this was a business trip. So, we continued to go to Rochester monthly and pick up the books. Flora and I usually made a day of it. We would go to the Rochester News in the morning, we'd have lunch, and then in the afternoon we'd shop or go to the theater, have dinner and come home, and have a really fine time. I continued to be the nominal head of the library but during the war, the other school librarian, Marion Royce, left and I became more and more involved in the school library. Flora took more and more responsibility in the Lee-Whedon, and I no longer needed to spend so much thought on it. When Flora became certified in 1955, my responsibility toward the library was ended. I've always been a reader and been interested in the library, of course.

Mc From 1955 to 1985 the Lee-Whedon Library has been moved several times. Helen, let's share our memories of some of these changes. For instance, what do you remember about Flora Webb as librarian?

Gill Flora is exactly the kind of person the Lee-Whedon Library needed at the time she came to it. She is capable, intelligent, well-read, and has a good sense of humor. She has organizing ability and works well with people. When Harold Rankin came to Medina as Superintendent of Schools in 1954, he provided the spark which was necessary to begin the separation of the library from the school. But it was Flora's dedication and perseverance which brought this dream to reality.

Mc I was always impressed with the ready smile and laughter of Miss Webb. I remember that <sup>she</sup> seemed to stimulate the students who came in, asked for guidance, or just talked with her.

Gill She did! She was good for them. She always challenged them. She had and still has wide interests, and she talks about them and gets other people interested in new ideas and new things.

Mc Thru the years the various library committees have made a real difference in the Lee-Whedon Library. I have read at some length of the work that Bill Blackburn has done for the library. Do you remember working with him?

Gill I did not work at all with Bill Blackburn. He became President of the Library Board after the library was no longer under the direction of the Board of Education. He and Flora Webb worked closely together to gain public support of the library and to get it moved to new quarters. Local Friends of the Library also gave much assistance in gaining public support for the library. Many of those activities are covered in Flora Webb's account (incorporated in this file).

Mc Remember when the one-room public library was moved to larger quarters, behind the High School building and into the old Central School building that eventually burned?

Gill Yes, at least the quarters were much larger, and the book collection had outgrown that one little room.

Mc I seem to remember that the library shelves sagged under the weight of the books.

Gill A library book shelf should not be longer than three feet. If you have one longer than that, it is bound to sag when you get it full of books. It's quite possible that some of the shelving was not standard size, or else that the books were so

heavy, or that the wood was not hard enough to keep it up the way it ought to be. We learned that in library school.

Mc Fortunately the present library building was in use before the old Central School building (where the Lee-Whedon Library was housed) caught on fire and burned down.

The addition of microfilm to the library has been of great help to historians. This was a gift of the Abbott Brownells in 1970. Working with this Oral History Project I have used the microfilm a number of times. It is interesting to look back in time to see the way they used to print the local newspaper.

Gill We used to have some of those old newspapers on file in the library, but there was never a decent place to keep them. They would have completely disingrated if they had not been given to us in microfilm.

Mc Flora Webb retired from the Lee-Whedon Library in 1972 and Mrs. Mary Goheen Zangerle became the Director. Many changes have taken place over the years and these changes have brought the children and younger people into the library in ever greater numbers. Perhaps it is because Mrs. Zangerle has several small children, she seems to be aware of what children like or need. In 1977 a full time children's librarian was hired: Mrs. Elaine Jamele. Children's authors are frequent guests, one of whom is Marjorie Falconer from Buffalo. She writes about various animals and snakes, and her books are very popular with the young people. Professor Ralph Dykstra from the University of Buffalo is an authority on the Laura Ingalls Wilder books and his visits to our library are memorable. Have you ever been to one of his presentations, Helen?

Gill Yes, I was invited last fall to the one he gave and I was fascinated. There were three or four other adults also present and we sat in the background. The children sat on the floor. Dr. Dykstra talked about Laura Ingalls Wilder's life and then he showed slides. The children were fascinated and so was I. Some of them had been there other times. They come by invitation only and I believe it is grades 4 thru 6 that are invited. ...

Mc After the slides, he opens an old trunk which is filled with examples of Laura's doll, and dress, and other such.

Gill Yes, he had some actual relics of the period. The "Little House" books were all lined up on a nearby shelf. Then, after his

program we had a delightful box-supper social, everything that might have been eaten by the people at that time. I've kind of forgotten now but it seems that we had a piece of cold chicken, a home made biscuit, an apple, and a cookie. I can't remember what else. The lights in the library were turned off and there was a lamp on each little table while we ate our supper. It was delightful!

Mc In the month of December, near Christmas time, the small children come to the library in their pajamas (ready for bed) and the parents deposit the children and leave. Inside the library the children gather around Santa Claus and listen as he reads The Night Before Christmas, or some other favorite poem or story. Later on the children have cookies and punch. As they come to this program, they are asked to bring a pair of mittens for the library's mitten tree. This otherwise unadorned tree is just inside the front door. Later on the mittens are given to the less fortunate children of this area.

The L-W Public library has a sizeable collection of large print books for readers whose eyesight might be failing.

G 111 The first collection of the large print books belonged to the NIOGA system and were in the Niagara Falls Public Library. Several years ago, it was found that the N.Falls library had deficiencies in its building and there were leaks all over the place. It simply had to be repaired because the leaks were causing real problems. All of the books had to be taken out of that library and put in other places while the library was completely done over. The large print books were brought to Medina. Fortunately there was a room where they could be stored, and it was felt that they would be there until the Niagara Falls library was able to take them back. At the time it seemed they might be in the Medina library for a couple of years. The large print books were finally returned to NIOGA during the summer of 1985. I am sure they are missed, but the Lee-Whedon Library now has a good collection of large print books, to which they regularly add titles.

Mc The L-W Medina library has a large collection of paperback books which readers are encouraged to donate. Often the quality of the paper leaves quite a bit to be desired. The number of all books in the library continually increases, as does the count of readers. The growing custom of making a donation to the library

in lieu of flowers when a loved one dies has enabled the library to expand its collection.

Gill Many of those books are expensive ones which the library normally would not have been able to buy: lovely illustrations, large books, really beautiful ones! This growing custom has made a great difference in the library's collection.

Mc There are numerous framed paintings, or copies of same, waiting to be checked out by the patrons. Also the library has many records and tapes for use. There is a computer for public use. The copy machine (I call it the Xerox, even tho it probably is not from that Company) is used by everyone.

Another way that our L-W Public library is being utilized is for various public service programs. The New York State Council on the Arts provides artists who visit the area for a brief period. These artists usually appear at the schools, the Senior Citizens' Center, and in the library. All this at no charge! They have sent us musicians, mime artists, and puppet shows. Congressman John LaFalce, the local firemen, and the policemen have spoken on various topics. These programs are well received by the general public. Well known area authors, such as Marjorie Falconer, have visited L-W several times. Our own daughter, Pam McAllister, was invited to speak at L-W Library when her first book came out. (The Bedside, Bathtub, Armchair Companion to Agatha Christie).

Gill The Lee Whedon Library is now large enough to accomodate several small groups of students as well as individuals; even though these people talk quietly there are no echoes. If the several workers at the front desk talk in a normal tone, the sounds generally do not disturb those seeking quiet accommodations. I am remembering the library as I knew it when I first came to Medina; the difference between our present library and the first one. That one little room which contained only adult books, and where one must whisper or talk in a very low tone. Young people were not encouraged to come to the library because they might "scare" off the adults! There was nothing but the books and a few magazines.

Of course that is not just the Lee Whedon Library that has

changed; the libraries throughout the nation have grown over the years to include so many more forms of communication

Mc Miss Gillmeister will you tell us how the L-W library is presently being financed?

Gill It is financed by local taxes collected by the Board of Education. At the Board of Education meeting in June, when the school tax vote is taken, there is a vote taken on the library tax. This is called the library tax and is collected separately; but it is collected by the School Board. The amount to be raised is set at the time of the school meeting. The voters vote whether they will or will not accept the figure that the Board of Education has given them. There are also many memorials given (both money and books); the library would be without many of its most beautiful books without those memorials.

Mc You can put just so many books into a building it seems, and to relieve this problem there is usually an annual book sale and record sale. I believe that the books/records which have not circulated for five or more years are put up for sale. This helps keep the shelves free for new books and records.

Is there any censorship in the L-W library today, Helen?

Gill I do not have a close connection with the present librarian and have never discussed censorship with her, so I really do not know. It would be difficult to start censoring because, if you want to censor, there are many books you would not allow yourself to buy. It's a matter of taste. If a book has literary quality then there may be a reason for buying it.

Mc You can always order a book through the NIOGA system and it usually reaches Medina within a week or two.

As we bring this interview to a close, will you bring us up to date on Miss Flora Webb? It was through the encouragement of Miss Webb that we have tried to recall the history of the Lee-Whedon Library.

Gill Flora Webb is now living in Northampton, Massachusetts. She chose to return there because her alma mater, Smith College, is there. Flora had friends there and she bought a lovely house. I have visited her several times. She is happy and well. I think if Flora had not been here, I would not have had the energy to go ahead and do what was necessary to get the Lee

Whedon Library established as it is now.

Mc It was through the dreams of Mr. William J. Lee and his daughter, Mrs. Mary Lee Whedon, and through the progression of many dedicated librarians such as you, Helen, that has made the Medina L-W Library the gem that it is today. As the pages of history continue to be turned, please accept my sincere appreciation for all that you and the many others have contributed.

XX

This interview was conducted by Mrs. Helen McAllister. The tape was transcribed and edited by same with some additions and corrections by Miss Gillmeister.



July 25, 1938

(left to right)

Edna Newell, Mary Lee Whedon, Jess Sanderson,  
Alice Hedley, Anita Acer, Inez Healy Wilson,  
Lena Tanner

Personal Memory of Mrs. Mary Lee Whedon

by Miss Flora Webb

My first memory of Mamie Whedon is admiring her in church, handsome in the Hudson seal coat and velvet hat that were considered "the thing" by the Acer, Lee, Merritt, Cook, Luther, Weld, etc. ladies. Mrs. Whedon's hat, black velvet with pink roses, set off her auburn hair and blue eyes. She was a very good looking woman, white haired and straight in her old age. I doubt that she had attended school beyond the Medina Academy but she was very well read and informed. She and my grandmother and their circle subscribed to THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, HARPER'S, McCLURE'S, THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, SCRIBNER'S and THE WORLD'S WORK. And since such authors as Galsworthy, H.G.Wells, Jack London, Arnold Bennett and Lincoln Steffens were serialized in those periodicals, together with lesser lights like Robert W. Chambers and Rupert Hughes, this meant that they were reading just about everything.

A public library was not an abstract idea to Mrs. Whedon, to her father William U. Lee, or to their friends. They regarded it as a community necessity. Medina should remember that Mrs. Whedon anticipated her father's will by establishing the library in 1928 in charge of the Board of Education. Nor should Medina forget that she denied herself cherished vacations at Chautauqua and many small pleasures to support the L-W as her income shrank during the Great Depression. In '38 - '39 she could no longer continue. The humiliation and sorrow this caused her was eased by the response of the whole community when the possibility of closing the library became known.

The Acers were related by marriage to Mrs. Whedon. Donald Acer, Hugh Whipple, Ed O'Reilly, then President of the Board of Education, and Arthur Trippensee, Superintendent of Schools, formed a committee to keep the L-W open, chaired by Hugh Whipple's wife, Helene. Under her dynamic (one has to use this kind of vocabulary for Helene) leadership temporarily funding was raised and an annual contribution for the library's budget voted at the next village election.

There had been four librarians: Grace L. Rugg, Helen Gillmeister, Gladys Beach and Henrietta Garrett. When Gladys, returning briefly after a vacation cruise, left to marry a passenger she met thereon Flora Webb was hired in 1940 by Mr. T (Trippensee), and stayed for thirty-two years ! His chief worry was that she did not read fiction herself and probably wouldn't buy any fiction for the library. This fear proved to be unfounded, and also his foreboding that her social life would interfere with her duties. Well, I worked every afternoon and evening and Saturday afternoons for eight years before calling him on that score. Mr. T did not believe in substitutes; felt that working in the library was a privilege and was astonished and hurt at my defection.

But I was locked from the beginning in an enduring struggle with Mr. T to keep the L-W's books in circulation and out of his private library. Many years later, in the 1960's, a box came from the



nursing home in Florida where he had died, finally returning seven books that he had taken along when he left Medina in the early 1950's.

Harold Rankin, the new Superintendent of Schools, was a breath of fresh air. The night he was interviewed by the Board, Mrs. Rankin had passed the evening driving around town trying to locate ~~the~~ public library, She was surprised to find it eventually in a front room of the High School building where she had left her husband. Mr. Rankin thought the whole business of the library's situation was wrong. It was evident that pressures of use on the L-W required new thinking. He set about changing things at once, importing eager and expert help from the State Library in Albany, N.Y.

Again Donald Acer formed a committee. In 1956 it successfully presented a referendum to the voters at the Annual School Meeting that separated the L-W from the school, giving it its autonomy, with its own board and budget, voted at the Central School District's annual meeting. With Harold Rankin's guidance the two boards then agreed to move the library from that hideously crowded one room to the entire first floor of the old Central School, in 1958. The L-W outgrew Old Central, too, but not before a frozen pipe over a long holiday weekend drenched the Reference Collection. It was a shocker to see those expensive books dripping on those bowed-out expensive Remington Rand shelves! But Old Central was a pal. It waited to burn down until the library had moved out.


Bill Blackburn was a member of the founding board, as was Milford Acer, Don Acer's son. Bill saw farther than the local scene. He was influential in forming the three-county NIOGA Library System in '59 - '60. By the way, NIOGA is not an Indian name but an acronym using Niagara, Orleans and Genesee and was dreamed up by Helen Ludlow, the librarian at Lockport. No effort was too much for Bill. On one occasion he drove Mrs. Fowler, then President of the Niagara Falls Board, and me in his pickup truck to a conference in Albany. Dinner at Keeler's made up for the rather stiff ride.

Bill moved the library twice, by hand, so to speak: from High School to Old Central, and by truck and apple crates to the new building in 1966. There would not have been a new building without Bill Blackburn and Helene Whipple. Helene was bursting with unused energy after recently retiring as a disaster expert and fund raiser for the National Red Cross; she simply went out and raised the money! That is the only way to describe her performance. The NIOGA people pried the federal dollars loose at Albany, and Bill and Helene did the rest. When the total did not quite meet the contractors' estimates, Helene invested in savings accounts all over Western New York and came up with what was needed. The CPA, who checked the final accounts, was impressed!

There was a slight flurry at one point occasioned by the desire of a few members of the Moose Lodge to sell the clubhouse for

conversion to a library. But more of the Moose members preferred to find beer rather than books in the club and the plan was dropped. Through all the turmoil, Joann Brundage presided as President of the Board, always available and always level headed.

The search for a site is a whole story in itself. The eventual choice on the railroad tracks aroused some criticism and finally some "I-told-you-sos" when a freight train derailed and piled up beside the library. No harm done, however. The building was designed by a Rochester architect bearing the good old Medina name of Brennan. Charlie was also the architect for the Lyndonville library a few years later.

The people who had the fun of setting up shop in the new building were Harriet Decker, Fannie Herriven, Alys Neal, Janet Schrader and Miss Wilkinson. Mary Wilkinson enjoyed an international reputation on her retirement from Enoch Pratt in Baltimore to come to Medina where her brother was Rector of St. John's church. For sixteen -- maybe seventeen? -- years from '56, she worked two evenings a week at the L-W, generously sharing her immense knowledge and her friendship with all of us. Her sister, Elizabeth Gerking, lived with her. Mrs. Gerking was a talented artist whose interest in the library was apparent in the quality of many displays and in the development of the art collection. 

Settling in had its thrills. It seemed the electrical contractors had somehow hooked up the ventilating system hindsideto, so that the doors opening outward went with a whoosh, taking the unsuspecting on a quick trip! Children were catapulted (they loved this) into the parking lot; Miss Wilkinson, a very slight little lady, once went right across the railroad tracks! The flat roof attracted the tossing of kittens and sporting equipment of all kinds. Until the novelty of the book-drop wore off, we never knew what would be found there.

From the point of view of the 1980's, the decade of the '60's was lush. Federal money was actually pressed into startled hands. I remember attending a meeting of school people to hear someone from Albany speaking on federal grants. He said, "Never mind how wild it sounds. Think up some way to spend this money." Clifford Wise was sitting across from me. His face was a study.

Through NIOGA, the L-W benefited from many thousands of dollars in book grants. Thank goodness for Miss Wilkinson, who knew how to buy wisely. And each year we received more memorial gifts. We were all very proud of the L-W's book collection, which was widely regarded as pretty good for a small library. It was heavily used, both in Medina and by loans to other libraries in the NIOGA system. The Board considered that we owed a great deal to Albany. They supported the loan of books and staff to the State Reformatory in Albion, and to the Drug Rehab Center.

Most of the stream of people coming through the library's doors reacted in the personal fashion that libraries everywhere seem to inspire. They made everything that happened worthwhile. It was lots of fun.

(MEMORYS... was contributed by Miss Flora Webb)

Today is the final article in the series offered this week on the four libraries in Orleans County in conjunction with National Library Week.

Today, Mary Zangerle of Lee-Whedon Memorial Library presents a history of the Medina library.

The Lee-Whedon Memorial Library was given to Medina in 1928 in charge of the Board of Education by Mrs. Mary Lee Whedon, daughter of William U. Lee. She thus anticipated the intent of her father's will — that his estate be left in trust "to build a library for Medina and community."

With legal sanction from the New York State Supreme Court, \$19,000 of the principal was released to build the first shop on the back of the high school. In exchange, the library was established in the school's large front room, entirely under the management of the school administration. The school librarian acted as Lee-Whedon librarian and Mrs. Whedon gave \$2,500 a year to support the library.

In 1939 losses due to the Depression forced Whedon to withdraw this yearly financial support. A committee headed by Mrs. Hugh Whipple raised funds to carry the L-W over the emergency for a year until the village voted \$1,500 annually for it; the remaining costs were absorbed by the Board of Education in the school budget.

In 1950, Whedon died and the share of her estate representing Mr. Lee's trust fund, \$70,000, was given to the Board of Education for supervision. The yearly contribution from the village ceased. The L-W was now supported entirely by the income from the Lee-Whedon trust fund and school taxes, its expenses so involved with the school's that even the Board of Education was unaware of exactly the amount spent for the public library.

**Lee-Whedon Library  
Begun In 1928**

In 1955, when Mr. Rankin succeeded Mr. Trippensee as superintendent of schools, one of his first projects was to see that the public library's affairs were put in order. At the annual school meeting in 1956, Lee-Whedon was reorganized as a central school district public library, with provisional charter from the Board of Regents to serve the school district. It raised its own budget, with the district as a tax base, and elected its own Board of Trustees of five members. Immediately, it was recognized that the L-W could not remain in the one room in the high school.

The first thought was that Old Central School might be remodeled as a new home, and architect Thomas Morin was retained to advise on the possibilities. The costs of conversion were never determined, because the Board of Education at a joint meeting with the Library Board in June 1958, indicated that it would at some future time need to use Old Central again for school purposes and that only the ground floor could be occupied by the L-W. The school bore the expense of removing partitions and partially painting the new quarters; the L-W Board paid for the rest of the painting and for structural changes to open the front door on Ann Street, buying also some \$3,700 of new equipment of which about \$500 was in gifts from community groups. In December, 1958, the library moved.

The L-W's circulation in 1955 was 24,152; in 1961 it had jumped to 49,952, far exceeding projections of growth. Student use ran very high, with only 17 seats and often 30 to 50 students to accommodate. The L-W had a book stock of about 14,500, which should have been nearer 25,000. It was rated the third library in the NIOGA System. The system, organized in 1959, is now the source of state-supported central buying and processing, as well as interlibrary loan. The Regents gave the library a permanent charter in the spring of 1962.

The expansions of the school and the L-W were again in collision in the fall of 1962. The upper floor of Old Central was occupied entirely by high school classes. The L-W's children's programs, necessarily a bit noisy, had been cancelled to avoid disturbing the classes upstairs and were greatly missed. There was no more room for adding shelving, tables or chairs.

Mrs. Whipple again came to the aid of Lee-Whedon in 1962 when she reorganized a "Friends of the Library" group whose purpose it was to support the library in its quest for a new building. In 1965, the campaign to fund library construction was begun in earnest with Donald W. Acer as general chairman and Mrs. Whipple as vice-chairman.

On June 11, 1967, the present Lee-

Whedon building was formally dedicated and a long-time dream realized. A grateful community continued to show its support for the library by taking out record numbers of books — 6,740 books in one month!

Miss Flora Webb retired from Lee-Whedon in June, 1972, having served the library since 1940, and John Bennett was hired in September. Under Bennett's tenure, the library continued to thrive with additions to services which included microfilm readers, audio cassettes and cassette players, government pamphlets, and topographic maps, in addition to a book rental plan and extended library hours.

Through the efforts of Bennett, William Feltz, Ozzie Joerg of NIOGA, and other Orleans County Library representatives, the county legislature approved the first county funding for the county libraries.

John Bennett resigned his position in November 1973, leaving Fanny Herriven as acting director until a replacement could be hired. In June, 1974, Mary Goheen Zangerle was hired as director and continues in that capacity today.

Reflecting on the past few years, changes are inevitable and community support growing. State grants and local effort have allowed for the hiring of a full-time children's librarian and expansion of children's services. In 1977 Elaine Jamele was hired as children's librarian, and continues to provide excellent service to children of all ages in the community. Special state grants and various bequests have also allowed for a circulating art print collection and carpeting of the library, in addition to a revamped and more efficient heating system.

Lee-Whedon has come into the computer age with a public access Apple IIe computer, made possible through the Curtis Foundation. The most recent change involves a circulation control computer which makes all aspects of loaning out books more efficient and accurate.

The more the library changes, the more it stays the same. We're still primarily concerned with serving our patrons and getting the right book to the right person at the right time, and that's a basic tenet of Mr. Lee's legacy "to make Medina a little better for having lived in it."