



SAMUEL B. GARTON

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A pioneer of the county who has been closely identified with the growth of Des Moines, more especially that of the East Side, is Samuel B. Garton, or Sam., as he is familiarly called by old-timers. He was born in Wisley, County of Surrey, England, February Third, 1848.

His father lived on a small, rented farm, raised wheat and table vegetables, which he took to London and sold in a market stall. Having a family of four boys and three girls, he found it difficult to make both ends meet at the end of the year. Hearing so much of the possibilities for a poor man in America, he decided to come and try it. Accordingly, May Twenty-third, 1854, with his family, he left London on the sailing vessel, *Christiana*, and arrived at New York on the evening of July Fourth, amid the glare of fireworks and hubbub of the celebration of the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by the New England, a strange greeting to an English-born citizen.

Immediately on landing, he went to Centerville, Indiana, where a sister had for some time resided. There he rented a farm for a time, but later opened a grocery on the Pike. The children attended school and assisted in the store and on the farm.

Nearby resided a wealthy farmer, who owned a farm on what was known as Saylor Bottoms, north of Des Moines. He made a proposition to Garton to go there and operate the farm, which was accepted, and in October, 1856, Garton, with his brother-in-law, Anthony Tilley, well known in Des Moines in the early days, and their families, started for Saylor Bottoms with two two-horse wagons, two one-horse wagons loaded with the usual outfit of clothing, bedding, housekeeping articles and a coop of chickens "on behind." The route was through Indianapolis, Bloomington, and Burlington. Illinois was a trackless prairie, not a house was seen. At Bloomington, they had to

buy water for their horses, a severe drouth having dried up all the sources of water supply, and water was at a premium.

They arrived at the farm late in the month, and found a renter in possession, with the right thereto until March. Their only resort was an unoccupied log cabin with two rooms. Each family took one room. Poles were cut, and a lean-to, with thatched roof, for sheltering the horses was attached to the cabin, and preparation made to pass the Winter. Flour was sixteen dollars a barrel, and Garton often said that had it not been for wild turkeys and prairie chickens which they shot, they would have starved. Tilley being a butcher, bought cattle, killed them, sold the carcasses in Des Moines, and with the proceeds purchased provisions for the families in a very limited way.

The next year came a big flood, in July, wheat and oats in the shock floated off down the river, and the corn was ruined. They therefore abandoned the bottoms, and rented land where the Danish College. Children's Home, and D. H. Kooker's residence now are, north of Union Park, and began farming again. They lived in a log cabin which stood where is now the pavilion at Union Park. During the Winter, the boys and girls attended the Alfred Harris School, three and a half miles distant, walking it every day. Subsequently, Samuel, and an older brother, William T., supplemented their education with a course in the business college of C. B. Worthington and J. W. Muffly, the first school of the kind in Des Moines.

In the early Sixties, Father Garton, as he was usually called, purchased an interest in the Carlisle flour mill, and, with his family, went into the milling business, where he remained several years, when his taste for farming induced him to purchase forty acres near Avon, and, with Samuel, turned over the wild prairie, fenced it, and put it under cultivation.

William T. also left the milling business and learned that of making bread and cakes, and early in the Spring of 1865 rented a small, one-story frame building of "Billy" Moore, and opened a bakery. It was on Walnut Street, at the southeast corner of Fourth, "Billy" having the year before moved his Hoosier Store up from Second Street. The bakery was on the third lot from the corner, next east of "Billy's" store, a two-story frame; next east, on the

alley, where Kurtz's store now is, was "Billy's" residence, a small, two-story frame. On the opposite corner north, the Lairds had a grocery. On the northwest corner, where the Valley National Bank now is, Anthony Tilley opened a butcher shop in a log cabin, and Harry Stephenson, who owned the corner, had his residence in the rear and west from the cabin. On the southwest corner was the old Saverv House, now Kirkwood. In 1867, William T. leased ground of Judge Casady and built a two-story frame on the second lot west, from the hotel (the lot next to the alley being occupied by Mrs. O'Toole, a milliner, in a one-story frame), moved his bakery into it, and, with his wife, lived on the upper floor. Next westward was W. A. Galbraith's grain and feed store, next Martin Tuttle's grocery, and on the corner Weaver & Maish's drug store, all in two-story frame buildings, trade then having only just begun its movement west of Fourth Street.

In 1860, Samuel quit farming and joined his brother, William T. In 1873, they opened a branch on the northwest corner of East Fifth and Locust streets, in a two-story frame building, and Sam. became the manager.

When the big fire occurred in Chicago, in 1871, and a cry went out for help, John J. Williams offered to furnish the Gartons all the flour they could make into bread, and four men worked two days and nights making bread, which was carried free to Chicago by the Rock Island Road.

In 1876, the partnership having been dissolved, Samuel leased the ground at Three Hundred and Thirty-one East Locust, built a two-story frame thereon, moved his bakery there, and lived in the upper story. In 1882, a boom having struck the East Side, he bought the ground at Five Hundred and Twenty-three East Locust, and built the brick building in which he still has his bakery and lunch room. He then built a three-story brick at Three Hundred and Thirty-one East Locust, in which is now Graber's dry goods store.

There is not now a merchant in business on the East Side who was there when he commenced business, and in all those years his store has been open for business six days in the week, and has received his personal attention.

Politically, he is a Republican, though his father was a Democrat until the Civil War came. He gives little attention to the game of politics, and in local affairs votes for the man deemed best fitted for the place.

Socially, he is affable, of sanguine-lymphatic temperament, somewhat stubborn in opinion, takes little interest in society fads, is a zealous supporter of schools, churches and industrial affairs, public-spirited and highly esteemed for uprightness and integrity. He is not a member of any clubs or societies except the Ancient Order of United Workmen. He contributed liberally to the fund which purchased and presented to the State Agricultural Society the grounds for the State Fair, and also to the fund for building the first iron bridge at Locust Street.

Religiously, he is a Baptist and an enthusiastic member of Calvary Church. He is the church Treasurer, and financed the building of the edifice dedicated June Twenty-fifth, 1905, free of debt. For twenty years, he has been a church Deacon.

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