



BARTRUM GALBRAITH

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A pioneer who made considerable noise in this community in the early days was Bartrum Galbraith. He was born August Ninth, 1832, in Jefferson, Greene County, Pennsylvania, of Scotch-Irish ancestry. His father was a physician. Bartrum passed his boyhood days going to the common school ten hours a day, and doing the usual boy's stunts about the home.

In 1849, when seventeen years old, he went to Brownsville, Pennsylvania, to learn the trade of blacksmith, and served an apprenticeship of three years. In 1852, he returned from Brownsville and worked until 1853, when he was attacked with the Western fever, his brother, William A., a merchant, who had preceded him, having sent to the old home glowing accounts of the business prospects at Fort Des Moines, and, with Doctor A. B. Shaw, the noted florist and one of the founders of the State Agricultural Society, came by steamboat to Keokuk, where they arrived June Thirteenth. There they, with William T. Marvin, boarded a Frink & Walker "jerkey," and the first day reached Fairfield, the second day Oskaloosa, the third day Fort Des Moines, Marvin landing at the Hoxie House, which he subsequently purchased, and it became the well-known Marvin House, and Galbraith, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, where the Northwestern Railroad ticket office is, then owned by his brother, W. A.

His first job was in the plow shop of John H. Given, on Vine Street; his second, with P. H. Buzzard, on Market Street. The coal in the shop was pried up with crowbars from the bed of the Des Moines River, down at Rattlesnake Bend, and hauled in wagons.

His last job as a journeyman was with Hutsonpillar & Dillinger, who had a shop in one of the double log cabins of the garrison on First Street, a little south and rear of the old Demoin House. It was in one part of the cabin

"Uncle" Thomas French, a well-known bachelor old-timer, made his home for several years. For that shop, the coal was got out of the river bank on the old Thompson farm.

In the Spring of 1856, Galbraith formed a partnership with Isaiah Maple, father of Doctor W. W. Maple, now a resident of the city, and they built a shop on Third Street, between Walnut and Locust, on what was called the Kellogg property, owned by Samuel Kellogg, a private in the infantry regiment of the garrison.

In 1857, Galbraith concluded to go back to the old home and get the girl he left behind him in 1853. He had accumulated three hundred dollars of Agricultural Bank notes, which were not worth much outside of Polk County—in fact, there was very little good bank currency in the whole state of Iowa, for the entire West was greatly embarrassed with a financial panic. He went to Hoyt Sherman & Company's bank and exchanged his Agricultural money for such of Eastern currency as would be good until he could get to Pittsburg with it. When he got back to Fort Des Moines with his bride, the Agricultural Bank had collapsed, and he congratulated himself that in the transaction he had escaped the loss of his three hundred dollars and secured a good wife.

Referring to the event a few days ago, he said: "We went to house-keeping in a three-room house on Fourth Street, owned by William Minson, at thirteen dollars a month rental. Living was not very high; porterhouse and loin steak was eight to ten cents a pound; a hind quarter of beef, four to five cents; butter, ten to fifteen cents; good wood, two dollars and fifty cents to three dollars a cord. Everybody burned wood in those days. Our principal fruit was wild crabapples and wild grapes. Our bill of fare would not compare very favorably with that of to-day, but it was healthful and went right to the spot."

In 1858, a lot was purchased at the northeast corner of Third and Locust, known for many years as the "Church Property." While negotiations were being made for the lot, one Mercer, who was somewhat eccentric, got it into his head that Galbraith and Maple were working a swindling scheme against his wife, who was interested in the property, and he went to Esquire Madison Young—the well-known old bachelor lawyer and Justice of the Peace—and

asked him to "read him up on the Law of Frauds." The Esquire listened to his story, said to him: "If you want to know anything about frauds, go to some schoolma'am," turned to his desk and closed up like a clam.

"Jim" Campbell and other old-timers used to tell the tale of the Esquire that at one time there was a flood, the rivers were rising very rapidly, and the Esquire, to satisfy himself as to how high they were getting, drove a nail into the side of the ferry boat, and frequently went to inspect it.

The eastern portion of the lot was sold to the German Lutheran Church Society, and the shop moved to the corner, and there Galbraith swung the hammer and pounded the anvil until 1897, thirty-nine years' occupation of the same spot. In the early days, his customers came from a radius of fifty miles, for he was considered the best workman in these parts.

One day, in 1858, Galbraith wanted some alcohol. The cast-iron prohibitory law was in force, and intoxicating liquors could be got only from Doctor D. V. Cole, whom Judge Napier had made the County Liquor Agent. The Doctor told Galbraith he could get the liquor for medical, mechanical and sacramental purposes only. As Galbraith wanted the stuff for his boots, he thought it would come under the rule for mechanical purposes, and the Doctor let it go.

In the Winter of 1861, William A. Spruance, a young fellow of seventeen years of age, known by Galbraith, wandered off to Denver to grow up with the country, but concluding Iowa was a better country, began working his way back, doing what jobs he could get. He stopped at Dennison, in Crawford County, to work in a saw mill, but didn't like it, and started for old Carroll on foot across the wild prairie. A blizzard came up, he got lost in the whirling storm, and wandered around from Friday morning until Sunday afternoon before he found shelter. One leg was frozen badly. Galbraith was notified, and went after him, but when he got to him, his leg had been amputated, for which he paid the man who sawed it off sixty dollars. He left the young man to come on when convalescent, but he brought the severed leg home, packed it in a box, and with a bottle, in which was an explanatory note, buried them in the lot east of his shop. When the cellar was dug for

the brick building a few years ago, the diggers unearthed the box and bottle, read the explanatory (sic) note, turned the whole over to Galbraith, who took possession of the leg bones, which were perfectly preserved, and he has them yet, a gentle reminder of an Iowa blizzard.

Politically, he is a Republican. He cast his first vote for President for John C. Fremont, and has not changed his politics. He has never taken any part in politics as a politician; is content to be classed with the common people. When he laid down his hammer in 1897, he retired from active business.

Socially, he is companionable; inclined to reticence; is of positive temperament and fixedness of purpose; is not a member of any club or fraternal society.

Religiously, he affiliates with the Baptist Church.

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