



MARTIN TUTTLE

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A family closely identified with the industrial and financial affairs of the early days of Des Moines was the Tuttle—James, the father, and his three sons, Martin, James M., and Samuel B. Martin was born in Monroe (now Noble) County, Ohio, November Twenty-seventh, 1824, of English ancestry on the father's side and German on that of the mother. His father was a large farmer, and also did an extensive business in live-stock, grain and land. Martin passed his boyhood days on a farm in the usual manner, and acquired such education as common schools of that period afforded, until he was eighteen years old. In later years, by diligent reading of good books and extensive traveling, wherein nothing escaped his observation or memory, he stored his mind with a wealth of treasure.

During his life, he visited Cuba several times, and every state and territory in the country, except, rather singularly, the state of Maine, the home of his ancestors, who settled there soon after the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock, and the territory of Alaska. In 1848, with another young man, he came to Iowa, via Chicago, from Indiana, on horseback. His object was to select a place for a future home. His choice was Farmington. He then returned to Indiana on horseback.

Asked once why he did not stop in Chicago, he replied that he did not like the location. While floundering through the wet, swampy land, he was offered a large piece of it for a pair of mules, but he refused, for the very good reason he didn't have the mules.

In the Spring of 1849, he married, and with his bride returned to Farmington, taking in Fort Des Moines for a short stop, where he met a young German artist who was making drawings from nature of birds and animals for a publication by the celebrated naturalist, Audubon, I think it

was. Martin joined him for several weeks and greatly assisted him in his quest of birds. In appreciation thereof—he was also a good portrait painter—he made a water color portrait of Martin, which is to-day as fresh and clear as when made, and is a highly prized treasure of the family.

Immediately on his settlement in Farmington, he engaged in general merchandise business. With his brother, James M., they built a small double brick house, the first brick dwelling in the town, in which they made their home several years. It is still standing. I believe.

Physically, Martin was not robust—in fact, there was not an excess of robustness in the entire community, for that most aggravating and contemptible of all human ailments, "fever 'nager," was frequently epidemic, and the two Tuttle families suffered severely.

In 1851, he made a trip to California overland, more for his health, and to see what was to see, than for gold.

In 1856, he went to Pike's Peak, also for his health, and drove an ox team. He was three months on the journey. He returned on horseback, camping each night wherever night overtook him. The sparsity of population interfered with the regularity of his meals somewhat, and sometimes eggs cost him two dollars a dozen. He also wandered over the old Nicaragua and Panama routes, and his descriptive rehearsals of the incidents and adventures of his travels were interesting and instructive.

In 1861, he came to Des Moines with his family, and made his home at the northeast corner of Fifth and Locust. Later, he took the brick house built by his father, on the site of the present Wellington Hotel, and built a brick block on the corner at Locust, for some time occupied by the Chamberlain Medicine Company.

Soon after his arrival, he opened a grocery store with his father in Sherman Block, at Third and Court Avenue. During the Winter months, they cut and packed pork in the cellar. In the Winter of 1861-1862, they, with Martin Winters, James Miller, and Doctor M. P. Turner, leased a brick building in the rear of Exchange Block, on Third Street, and fitted it for cutting and packing pork, where they handled about three thousand porkers, at a cost, of one dollar and ninety-one cents per one hundred pounds net, or an average of less than four dollars per head. The product went to New York,

but so difficult were the means of getting to market, the highest price in New York for the season being two dollars and a half for the best net pork, their profit for the season was fifty-six dollars, or eleven dollars for each partner. The partnership was too large, the profits too small, and they quit.

In 1862, Martin built the first exclusive meat packing house in the town. It was the building now occupied in part by the Central State Bank, on Fifth Street. The war demand for provisions began to be felt, and prices were more remunerative, the long distance to railroads, bad roads, and cost of transportation, however, absorbed nearly all of the profit. The father, Martin and Sam., were all in it. They bought hogs on foot, and the killing was done by Albert Grefe, at his slaughter house. They also bought from farmers hogs that had been killed and dressed on the farm. They cut and packed that season about thirty-five hundred hogs, and Sam. Cope, who was a clerk in their store, bossed the job. Sam. Tuttle concluded pork packing was mighty poor business. He quit and went back to Farmington for a time, but finally drifted back again to Des Moines, and went into the artificial stone making business.

In 1870, Martin formed a partnership with S. A. Robertson, in the stone and lime business. Their quarry was at Earlham. They made a contract to furnish stone for the foundation of the new Capitol, and did a heavy business until 1880, when Martin retired, and became a contractor for public work of the city, which consisted mostly of paving.

In 1871, he was elected Mayor of the city, and served one term. He was a Democrat, yet the popular vote of the city was Republican, as evidenced in the election of Captain M. T. Russell, a Republican, for City Marshal. He verified the faith of business men and taxpayers, in his business capacity, honesty and integrity, by giving them a sample of good civic government.

In 1881, he formed a partnership with B. C. White in the Capital City Flour Mill, at Third and Market. In 1883, he retired from active commercial business, and devoted his time to the supervision of his various investments, and living on Easy Street.

In 1888, he was appointed by Mayor W. L. Carpenter a member of the first Board of Public Works, for the term of three years.

In 1895, when the Central State Bank was organized, Tuttle was elected President, and held the place until the end of his life, in November, 1902.

As already stated, he was a Democrat, but not a politician. He sought no public office. The only two he held were in response to an expressed public sentiment, regardless of politics. During the later years of his life, he was a member of the Grant Club.

Socially, he was strongly inclined to domesticity. His home was an ideal one. To be a blessing to it, to his children, to the community in which he lived, seemed to be the sole purpose of his life. Firm in his convictions, he was also broad-minded and tolerant respecting the opinion of others. As a citizen, he was highly esteemed for his sterling integrity and reliability in word and deed. He was an enthusiastic lover of Nature in all her multifarious forms. The woods and riversides were favorite resorts; birds and animals his coveted companions. The most treasured memories of him by his children and grandchildren are of frequent, often daily, rambles with him in the woods and fields, during his later years, and the interesting stories related of birds, animals and the various interesting scenes met in his travels.

Religiously, in early life, he was a member of the Methodist Church, but in later years he abjured all denominational creeds, yet he was of reverent spirit. He abhorred hypocrisy and falsity in all their forms. He measured character by truth. The Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man was good enough religion for him.

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