



SAMUEL GREEN

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OF the early settlers who helped to build the town, few were better known, though very quiet and unostentatious, than Samuel Green, or Sam., as he was familiarly called by old-timers.

Having thoroughly learned the foundry business in New York, he came to Des Moines in March, 1857, the first practical foundry-man in the town. He did, for a short time after his arrival, what all newcomers did—whatever he could find to do. One of his introductory jobs was helping S. A. Robertson with one of his first jobs, to make repairs on the old "Grout House," which stood on Court Avenue, southwest of the State House, in which T. E. Brown and his wife were living. It took its name from its construction of small cobblestones, lime and mortar. It was once the most fashionable hostelry in the town, and headquarters of members of the Legislature, and state officers.

Sam. very soon secured employment as foreman, molder, melter, pattern and flask maker, and general utility man, with H. M. Hemminway, who had a small foundry on East Walnut between First and Second streets. The river bank was fringed with small residences, a few shops, a mill and a woolen factory. The town was small, business was depressed, money was scarce. "Gold pieces looked mighty big in those days, for most of the money was 'wild-cat,' practically worthless, which nobody wanted, though we had to take it," he says. It was the year of the worst panic known in the history of the state. The entire populace, scattered over the vast domain from river to river, shut out of the markets of the seaboard, were utterly prostrate. It touched the sick body of desolate and despairing agriculture; it paralyzed the arm of the artisan and toiler. Values were destroyed, personal credit forfeited, individual liabilities were overwhelming. The credit of the state was impaired; there was more than one hundred and fifty thousand

dollars of floating debt in Auditor's warrants, drawing eight per cent interest, with few purchasers, even at a large discount.

The prospect was discouraging to an ambitious young man. On the East Side, from the river to Capitol Hill, the ground was low and wet, no sidewalks, and very few houses. From the river at Court Avenue, a trestle footway about three feet high was built nearly to the hill for the benefit of the members of the Legislature and state officers. I think Will. Porter has not forgotten that bottom. He was in politics, with a craving desire to get at the pie counter, and was the Democratic candidate for State Printer, the Winter after Sam. arrived. The day was fixed for the Legislature to vote in joint convention, and Will started in a buggy for the State House, which stood where the Soldiers' Monument now is, but the mud had such a grip on the horse and buggy, he did not get there until the voting was over, and John Teesdale, a Republican, was elected. Will. always declared that if the mud had not been so deep, and held him back, he would have won out.

On the west side of the river, Second Street, from Market to Court Avenue, was the business thoroughfare. There were but one or two buildings on Third Street, Court House Square, the Summer Sam. arrived, was sown with wheat, and the county paid John Railing eleven dollars and a half for plowing, sowing, and harvesting it. Who got the crop, the record does not say. Judge Napier was running county affairs then, and he generally got what he wanted. Amos Brandt, the well-known ex-County Auditor, was running a farm during Napier's reign. One day, during harvest-time, one of the machines broke down, and he came to town to get the necessary repairs, which done, he scurried back. Arriving at Kimball's Bridge, he ran against Napier, who stood in the middle of the road, arms outstretched, and commanded him to stop. Amos, knowing his autocratic authority over bridges and roads, suddenly halted, and asked the reason for his stoppage.

"You can't cross that bridge," replied the Judge.

"What is the trouble with it? I crossed it a short time ago, and am in a great hurry; have been to town to get some machinery repaired; the men and teams are waiting. Isn't the bridge safe?"

"You can't cross that bridge unless you give me a chew of tobacco!"

The Judge got the tobacco.

Sam., however, had come to stay, and in 1859, at the Hemminway shop, was made the first reaper made in Polk County.

Soon after Sam. joined Hemminway, they wanted some coke for melting iron. They went down the river above Rattlesnake Bend, dug out of the bluff three wagon-loads of coal, dug a hole seven feet in diameter and three feet deep, in the middle of Walnut Street, near the river, dumped the coal into it, set fire to it, banked it over with earth, and let it burn three days. When uncovered, there was a good quality of coke, the first made in Polk County, out of Iowa soft coal, so far as known, thus demonstrating that Iowa coal can be coked. It made good iron, but as hard as flint.

In 1860, the sorghum craze struck the farmers throughout the country, and to meet the demand for some device to express the cane, the Hemminway shop designed and made small, portable crushing mills, and as the demand increased, a small mill was erected on the East Side, to which cane was brought to be crushed, which was of great benefit to the farmers unable to purchase a portable crusher.

In 1860, Sam. formed a partnership which necessitated a dwelling-house. Houses were scarce, and he built one, one and one-half stories high, with four rooms, on the river front opposite the new City Library. The shingles and siding were Black Walnut; all other lumber was White Oak, and for both he paid a dollar and a half per hundred feet. In that house, he lived four years, when he built another on the corner of East Second and Locust, where he lived fourteen years, and then built a fine residence on the same street, on Capitol Hill.

In 1867, he decided to embark in business on his own account. He had very limited means, but a large amount of pluck and perserverance (sic). He leased part of a lot where Given had a plow shop, corner of Third and Vine, and built a small foundry, at an expense of two hundred dollars. When the first blast was turned out, his books showed an indebtedness of over seven hundred dollars, which discouraged him, fearing he could never satisfy his creditors, but his marital partner, ever helpful with her optimism, encouraged him to go on. In this foundry, he made all the castings used in the Given House.

As the years passed, by industry, economy, good judgment, and fair dealing, his business increased so that greater facilities were needed, and he bought the Dippert harness shop, the old Frank Allen bank, Judge Casady's first law office, and other old landmarks on Second Street, tore them down, and built a two-story brick thereon. In a few years, more space was needed, and he bought more lots northward to Vine. He added heating furnaces to his business, and soon after took his sons, Frank and James, born and raised in the business, into partnership. New equipments were added, a little more steam put on, until now the establishment has become one of the leading manufacturing industries of the city, its trade extending as far west as Colorado.

Politically, Sam. is a Republican of the blackest kind, though his father and six brothers were radical Democrats. He cast his first presidential ballot for John C. Fremont. He is not a politician, nor office-seeker. In local affairs, he exercises the right and duty of every good citizen, to vote for the highest public welfare. When he formed the partnership (sic) with his sons, a mutual pledge was made that neither of the firm should seek or take any political office, a pledge which has been rigidly observed, yet, despite that, in 1862, his numerous friends having faith in his integrity and interest in public affairs, determined to nominate him for Alderman, but he would not permit it.

Socially, he is genial, popular, interested always in educational, religious, and temperance movements, for the betterment of society. He is a member of the Order of Odd Fellows, once holding the office of Treasurer of Capital Lodge Number One Hundred and Six; also of the Order of Good Templars, and was a charter member of Capital Lodge of the Ancient Order of United Workmen. He has always been the friend and supporter of the labor class.

Religiously, he is a Methodist, identifying himself with the First Church when its first brick meeting-house was built, where the Iowa Loan and Trust Company building now stands, on Fifth Street, and is a loyal supporter of the faith.

By judicious management, energy, honesty, and an inexorable rule to give every man a fair deal, he has acquired a competency, and in 1904 turned over the foundry to his sons, and retired to the

southwest corner of Fourteenth and Capitol Avenue, overlooking Franklin Park, where he can enjoy the recompense of a life well spent, and work well done.

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by L. F. Andrews

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