

A Letter Well Worth Reading

The News is fortunate to be able to present to its readers the following letter from George P. Barton, a brother of Enos M. Barton, the founder of our Company. The writer was for years a member of the firm of Tanner & Barton, patent attorneys. They looked out for our patent interests at a time when a Patent Department of our own was a dream of the future. Mr. George Barton has always been very close to our Company, and his letter throws interesting light on the financial problems of its earliest days.—Ed.

It was doubtless in the fall of 1869 that Elisha Gray bought out the interest of George W. Shawk in the business of Barton and Shawk.

I have talked with my brother, Emory D. Barton, who lives with me here; there are certain incidents that I clearly recall, and putting everything together I would put the approximate date October 1st, 1869.

We doubt if there were any articles of co-partnership drawn.

My brother Enos Melancthon Barton, according to family record which I have before me, was born in Lorraine, Jefferson County, N. Y., December 2nd, 1842, and married Kitty Richardson, in Rochester, N. Y., October 28th, 1869.

We recall that immediately after the marriage he went to Cleveland, where his business was, and that he and his wife either boarded with the Grays, or that the families boarded at a common place.

My point is that the bride at once became intimately acquainted with Mrs. Gray, who was quite a superior and interesting woman.

Probably my brother, in the article you mention, tells of his buying an interest in the Shawk business, and becoming his partner **about a year before Elisha Gray succeeded Shawk.**

I have vivid recollection of the difficulties that he had to face in raising about \$1,500 to pay Shawk for the half interest in the business.

James Kellogg, father of Milo G. Kellogg, endorsed a note for \$500 at 7% for that amount, loaned by George Gates, of Rodman, N. Y. I personally took the note, driving over the snow banks about five miles from where we lived, and was given the money in currency. This I took to Hungerford's Bank in Adams, and there I bought a draft for the amount and mailed it to my brother, who after making the arrangements had returned to Cleveland. **James Kellogg himself loaned \$800 additional, taking as security a mortgage on our farm.** The title was still in our father's estate, and it took some time to get papers in shape. But I got that money and sent a draft for the amount. Enos after he was 21 had furnished much more than the \$800 for the support of the family, and mother said he was entitled to it and went

against the advice of friends in giving the mortgage. Interest charged was 7% in *gold*; usury, of course, but I guess conventional.

This was about February of 1869.

That George Gates's five hundred dollars I have always looked on as the beginning of the business of your Company.

Driving with the one-horse cutter with my brother up to Rodman for him to make the arrangements with Gates, the drifts were as high as the fences and we had to take to the open fields. Coming back we had to go down a bank and the cutter tipped up from behind, and out we lunged, men, seat and buffalo robes, into the snow. We went head first, and were flat on our faces. As Enos got up shaking himself, he said, "What did you tip over for?" My reply was, "I didn't." (I had tipped *up*, you will see, not *over*.) His reply was, "Well, if I'd known that I wouldn't have got out!"

But let me say seriously that the responsibility I felt as I was driving alone a few days later, from Rodman to Adams, with that five hundred dollars in my vest pocket was not less than painful; the snow was still drifted, though it was not then blowing as on the previous trip. But I kept going over in my mind, "What if something should happen to *me* and the money should be lost!"

Soon after the firm of Gray & Barton was established, General Anson Stager, then Superintendent of Western Union in Cleveland, became a general partner. He furnished half the capital, but took no salary.

How they shortly moved to Chicago is well-known history.

I mention what may not be known—that they were very fortunate in escaping fires. First, their factory was on the west side of the river, and there was a big fire about them, but they just escaped. Then they moved to the South Side, on South State Street, where they were at the time of the Big Fire. They were just south of where the fire was stopped, but the old place was a wilderness.

I have done much more than your letter calls for, but it may be some one will like to have a passing glance of the time of small things when dollars were big.

Very truly,

GEORGE P. BARTON.

