BANKING EXPERIENCE. 1874

When Gary was about twenty-eight years of age he was requested by the cashier and the teller, respectively, in a National Bank at Chicago to join them in establishing a private country bank at Wheaton, and after some inquiry and consideration he accepted. A cousin of Mr. Gary, who had been engaged in general merchandise in the county, was selected as cashier and placed in charge of the bank, although Mr. Gary was at the bank for a short time every day and had general supervision, thus becoming more or less familiar with the banking business on a small scale.

At the start the new bank, under the name of Miner, Gary & Webster, at the request of Mr. Miner, cashier of the National Bank referred to, purchased a limited amount of the capital stock of the National Bank. With some success, though not large, the new private bank continued in business for about eighteen months, although Gary soon learned that considerable cash was needed in the business as the amount of deposits changed from time to time, the farmers and others in the vicinity depositing their small surplus funds during certain periods of the year and drawing out the same at other times, besides needing and requesting credit at such times in order to carry crops or stocks, etc., etc. In the late summer of 1876, the National Bank in Chicago failed in business and was declared bankrupt. Almost immediately a run on the country bank was precipitated and, notwithstanding the deposits were not large, it seemed clear that unless full confidence could be established and maintained the situation might become very serious. However, Gary's father, brother, uncle and two cousins offered to lend their names to the firm, and old depositors returned to the bank and many new ones were added. Miner and Webster retired from the firm and Gary personally assumed all responsibility. The experience cost Gary considerable, as he paid for the National Bank stock and besides a liability on it to the creditors of that bank and other expenses of opening the bank, including furniture, fixtures, books, etc. But the experience was valuable in many respects. The bank prospered, Gary remained sole owner for many years and finally organized a State Bank, selling a minority of the stock at par to old customers and paying cash for a majority of the stock. Gary remained President of the bank until after his removal to New York City in 1898 and then presented his stock to two sons-in-law. The bank is still thrifty, probably having the largest business in the county of Du Page. It has celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

In later years Gary became interested in and connected with several large banks in Chicago and New York City. He has been a member of the Board of Directors of ten or more banks, serving as chairman of one and member of the executive committee of another. He still retains, considering the limit of his fortune, a large interest in several of the largest banks both in Chicago and New York, though for various business reasons he has retired from official connection with all of them except one. His experience in the banking business, he claims, has been of considerable advantage to him in the consideration of many and large financial transactions. He has frequently stated to the officers of banks, in which he possessed an interest, that there are two important things for the president and other officials of a bank to learn, viz., to constantly bear in mind that it is better to allow the funds of a bank to remain idle than to loan them on doubtful security or to a dishonest applicant, and also to learn how to refuse, when necessary, an accommodation to a man in such a way and manner as to retain his respect and friendship. This he insists can be done by giving frankly the reasons for refusal and expressing regret for the circumstances which compel it. Mr. Gary's friends state that his opinion and advice in banking matters are sound and valuable.

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