

THE GARTLAN STORY

Dedicated to Elizabeth Gartlan Follis who died March 8, 2007, in her 90th year.

By Paul Gartlan, Great Grandson of Michael Gartlan Sr.

The Potato Famine was devastating for many families in Ireland -- the poor and the wealthy, The Gartlans, who ran a very successful brewery in Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, were no exception.



Michael Gartlan Sr. with his children, Roger, D'Arcy, Edward, Molly, Bess and

Fortune gained. Fortune lost.

The migration to Canada was unsettled -- initially to Wellington Square (now Burlington), to Nottawasaga Township, The Batteaux and to Nottawasaga Station, now modern-day Stayner.

Michael Sr's Father, James, found pioneer life very objectionable after settling his family near Collingwood, trying to eke out a living on barren land. He was apparently lured by the \$1,000 offered to Canadians to join the American Civil War. He left the family of five, and Michael was his mother's helper from age 16.

Michael (1846-1924) was an enterprising lad in his teens. Loading merchandise on the Collingwood docks (the so-called new Chicago of the North), he caught the eye of Thomas Long, an Irish migrant, who gave him an apprenticeship in retailing at T. Long and Bro. in Collingwood.

In 1867, Michael, age 21, was sent to manage the Nottawasaga Station log store on the north side of Main Street which sold lumber, grocery, candy and dry goods. At some point the Longs rebuilt on Main Street.

Michael married Elizabeth Hall from Niagara on the Lake in 1880. Their children were: D'Arcy, Roger, Nan, Bess, Mollie and with second wife, Margaret, Edward.

Michael later bought into the business to be called Long Bros. and Gartlan. Then came sole ownership and the name M. Gartlan and Co. Ltd., known thereafter as the Gartlan block.

Bess, in her memoirs, remembers life as a young girl living in the spacious quarters above the store before the turn of the century. She also states that, "During early childhood, I have no memory of my father (Michael). He was busy day and night in the store, managing, keeping books, and later trying to make the business pay him so that he might pay off the good friends (Longs) who sold it to him."

The business grew rapidly from a general store to include Gartlan Grain and Seed Co. next to the CN rail.

They were the community's two largest businesses. Sons Roger, D'Arcy and Edward became part of the business and took over after their father died in 1924.

The mill thrived. Major customers were Habitant and Campbell soups. Gartlans was the largest supplier of split peas to the Caribbean.

Jim Mayne worked at the mill as a teenager, earning \$8 a week. His job was to get into a large suspended bag and pack sheep's wool with his feet. He recalls the 1922 Traffic Truck used to haul product. "It was chain-driven and had solid tires."



Inside the Gartlan Dry Goods Store (now Stayner Pet Store) with Roger, D'Arcy,

During the 30's, the Gartlan block was taken over by F. T. Hill. The mill carried on, but Roger's health declined during The Second World War and he died in 1946. Sons Michael and Jerry, (who was then a teen), ran the company as Gartlan Brothers until 1950 when it was sold.

Jerry Gartlan remembers working all night, loading boxcars with 500 bags of peas, stacked 10 high. Up to 500 acres in Perkinsfield, Elmvale, Minesing and Collingwood were contracted to grow peas. He recalls delivering the seed around Easter and picking up the crop in the fall. "The roads were bad. The pickups were difficult, especially at night when you had to find the entrances to the fields."

The Gartlan family was truly a pioneer and prominent family in Stayner.

(with files from Bev, Patti, Jerry, Chris, Betty, Jim, and Shawn Follis, The Stayner Sun and Simcoe County Archives)