

Portrait and biographical record of the Willamette valley, Oregon,
Containing original sketches of many well known citizens of the past and present ..
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ABNER DAVIS GARDNER – A man whose business career has contributed materially to the prestige of Stayton, Marion county, is A. D. Gardner the character of whose work extended beyond the narrow confines of that little city, reaching two thirds of the way to the Atlantic coast, the section of the country which has found it hard to believe all that is said of the great resources of this part of the northwest. The flour produced by the mills of the Gardner Brothers has been awarded two prizes for its excellence, the first being at the World's Columbian Exhibition at Chicago, in 1893. and the second at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha in 1898; and the awards are emphatically endorsed by thousands of consumers throughout the west.

The father of the subject of this sketch, A. D. Gardner, Sr. was born in Ohio in 1819; subsequently removed to Osage county, Mo., and in that state was united in marriage with Sarah P. Johnson in 1841. Immediately thereafter he removed to a location near Des Moines, Iowa, following the occupations of farming and preaching, the latter in the local way so popular in the earlier days. Not realizing a sufficient remuneration from his combined efforts, he decided to emigrate to a more western state, following up his intention in the spring of 1852 by heading a party bound for Oregon. Mules and ox teams were employed in the expedition, and Mr. Gardner was chosen to command the train. After a wearisome trip of several months the caravan arrived in Oregon. Mr. Gardner and his family spent their first winter here near Salem, where he made as careful an investigation of the resources of various sections of the Willamette valley as was possible under the circumstances. As a result of his inquiries he decided to locate in Linn county, where he took up a donation claim of three hundred and twenty acres the following spring. The house erected on the claim, though constructed of roughly hewn logs, was regarded as a very fine one in those days, since it possessed two rooms, whereas most settlers were content, or seemed to be, with but one room. Most of his farm was bottom lands at Fox Valley, on the Santiam river, and was provided with excellent natural advantages for general farming and stock-raising. The remaining years of his life were passed upon this estate, with the exception of a few years during which he conducted a hotel at Scio, to which town he removed for better school advantages. He died in 1885, at the age of sixty-six years. Mr. Gardner was the father of eight children, named in the order of their birth as follows, Mary L., widow of Dr. I., S. Skiff, of Salem, Ore.; Isaac W., living on the homestead: Sarah, wife of James Berry, residing near Mill City, Ore.: Electa J., wife of J.I. Crabtree, of Stayton, Ore.; Abner D., of this review: Elizabeth E., deceased: Marilla, wife of James Gardner, of Baker City, and Etta, wife of Charles Mills, who resides in Fox Valley. Abner D. Gardner was born in Fox Valley, Linn county, Ore., March 27, 1855. He was reared on the homestead, receiving every advantage in the educational line which the public schools of Scio afforded, in addition to private schools. When twenty-one years of age, he purchased a drug store at Stayton, in partnership with Dr. McCauley, and six months later bought the interest of his partner. It is not necessary to enlarge upon his success in this undertaking, for in a country where opportunities are so plentiful that they tempt men to try another than their own established business, success is reasonably sure to follow.

In 1891 Mr. Gardner purchased the Stayton flouring mills, which are now operated under the name of Gardner Brothers. Upon his purchase of this industry he reconstructed the mill, putting in the most improved modern machinery, including that necessary for the roller process. The capacity of the mill is about eighty barrels per day. The location is very advantageous, being upon the Santiam river, which furnishes the motive power. In 1899 he disposed of his drug store in order that he might give his undivided attention to his milling interests, which have increased year by year, as the territory he supplies becomes more thickly populated. In 1878, Mr. Gardner was united in marriage with Minnie Schneider, a native of Iowa, and a daughter of Albert and Mary Mohr Schneider, who were born in Switzerland and Germany, respectively. Mr. Schneider was one of the youngest soldiers in the Mexican war. Four children have blessed the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Gardner; Ethel E. and Vera A.,

graduates of Willamette University, and Norma and Abner Davis, Jr. Mr. Gardner has an interesting family, and is giving to his children every possible educational advantage, realizing that a good mental equipment will have a greater bearing upon their future lives than a liberal heritage of worldly goods. In 1901, Mr. Gardner embarked in the dairy business, and has eight hundred acres devoted to this industry. That Mr. Gardner's good citizenship has not been unappreciated is evidenced by the fact that in 1876 he was appointed postmaster of Stayton and for thirteen successive years served in this office, under both Democratic and Republican administrations. As a boy he received training that proved helpful to him in this work, his father having been postmaster at Fox Valley for several years. Though a staunch Democrat in his political convictions, he has never exhibited a narrow or offensive partisan spirit, but has shown himself to be first of all a splendid type of the American citizen. He has been a member of the town council for two terms, and has served for some time on the school board. Fraternally he is identified with the Masons, being a member of Santiam Lodge No. 25, A. F. & A. M., in which he has been secretary for several years, as well as filling other positions: is also identified with Aumsville Lodge, A. O. U. VV. Degree of Honor No. 147, Stayton Camp No. 51, Woodman of the World, and is a charter member of Stayton Circle No. 142. He is a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in which he has officiated as class leader, and is now trustee and steward. Mr. Gardner is in the highest sense a public spirited citizen. He contributes freely of his time and his means toward the success of all movements which have for an end the improvement of the moral, educational, social or industrial status of the community, and is recognized as a man of probity and a high sense of personal honor. It is to such men as he that the northwest owes much for its advancement, and the State of Oregon for the position which it has attained among the sisterhood of states in the American commonwealth. Those responsible for the compilation of this volume take pleasure in honoring the request of those who know Mr. Gardner best, that he be occupied a place of more than passing distinction in the memoirs of the town who have taken the lead in the march of progress in the Willamette valley.