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Article Summary: This is the story of Daniel Gantt, who served as chief Justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court in 1878, as told through letters and excerpts from his journal. Personal family history and personal viewpoints are included in this insight into one of the founders of Nebraska jurisprudence.

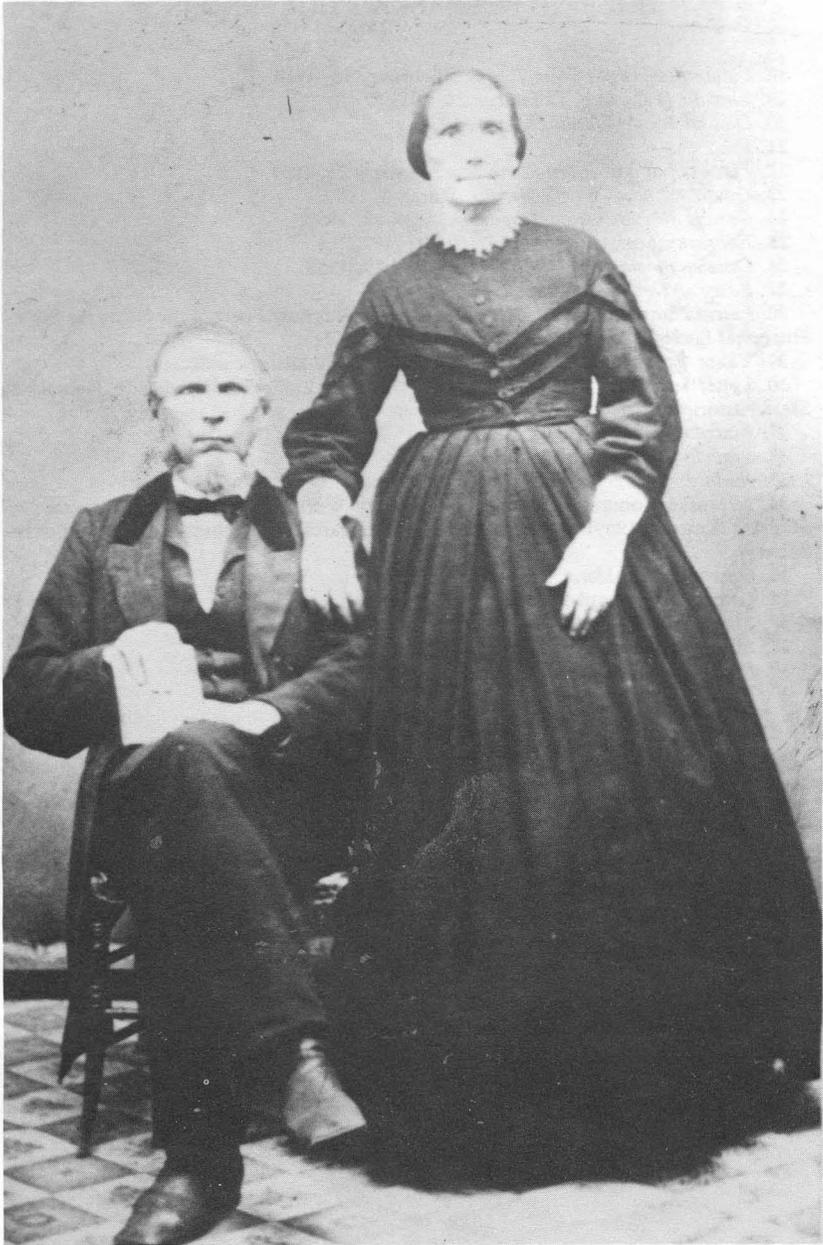
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Photographs / Images: Daniel Gantt with second wife Harriet Cooper Gantt; Agnes (Nancy) Fulton Gantt, first wife of Daniel Gantt; J Daniel Gantt; Adlenia and Fulton Gantt, children of Daniel Gantt; Adlenia Gantt and husband John Chalfant, Plattsmouth; Adlenia Gantt Chalfant and son John Jr; Adlenia and sister, Mary Alice Gantt Rorebeck



Daniel Gantt with second wife Harriet Cooper Gantt. Photos courtesy of Mary Cochran Grimes and Mary Chalfant Ormsbee.

**CHIEF JUSTICE DANIEL GANTT
OF THE NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT:
LETTERS AND EXCERPTS FROM HIS JOURNAL,
1835-1878**

By Mary Cochran Grimes

Daniel Gantt's decision to move his family in 1857 from Pennsylvania to Nebraska led to years of financial hardships and family tragedy, but eventually to success in his profession of law. An active participant in the early politics of Nebraska Territory, he served first as associate justice (1872-1878) and later as chief justice (January-May, 1878) of the Nebraska Supreme Court.¹ Gantt is recognized as one of the founders of Nebraska jurisprudence.

The 13th in a family of 15 children, Gantt was born of Dutch-English ancestry near Newport, Pennsylvania, June 29, 1814. The name Gantt was originally spelled Gaunt, being traced to Peter Gaunt of Lincolnshire, England, who settled at Sandwich, Massachusetts, about 1630. Daniel Gantt was of the sixth generation in America.² Fortunately the journal and diary he kept from 1834 to 1872, now in the files of the Nebraska State Historical Society, and many of the letters he wrote to his children, in the possession of several great-granddaughters, have survived to give us a glimpse of his life and times. The spelling and style are essentially Gantt's.

Daniel Gantt grew up on a Perry County, Pennsylvania "mansion" farm, which his father, Joseph, had carved out of the wilderness, probably about 1790. He attended the log-cabin school located on his father's farm.³ At the age of 10 while Daniel was trimming some fruit trees, he cut his left knee so severely that he was confined to bed for six months.⁴ After he recovered his leg remained stiff for the rest of his life.

Most of the Gantt family seem to have been farmers. With a bad leg and a good mind, Daniel Gantt turned to books. He taught school and studied surveying, elocution, and languages. Later he took up the study of law.

When the free-school act (Common School Law) was passed in Pennsylvania, Gantt was teaching at Colonel Thompson's subscription school in Buffalo Township of Perry County.⁵ This school was the first in the state to adopt the act, and Gantt wrote in his journal about the subsequent examination of teachers:

1835 3 January. I met the Directors & Inspectors, elected under this new law, for the purpose of being examined. All the teachers of the District were present. The examination was indeed very brief, and I do not think one of the members of the board knew the difference between a participle and a parsnip. The right men were not elected, but this is the first board & the people may do better hereafter.

Gantt was also an enthusiastic and energetic church member⁶ when long sermons, long speeches, and debates furnished entertainment as well as prompted piety:

1836-1837. In the early part of the winter the Rev. E. West gave a public challenge to the Ministers of the different denominations in Newport, to discuss the subject of Christian baptism. Mr. West is an immersionist of what is denominated the Winebrennanatt⁷ class. Upon the request of some of these clergymen, I accepted the challenge of Rev. West. . . .

1837 15 January. (Sunday). The discussion took place before a large audience, and attracted their attention from ten o'clock A.M. till about the same time at night, except an interval of about three hours in the afternoon. While I was speaking at a late hour in the night, I proposed to suspend, and continue our discussion at another time, but the audience earnestly desired we [us] "to go on."

Gantt's interests and activities were legion. During the winter of 1837-1838, in addition to teaching school, he superintended three singing schools in different towns and took charge of the business of the Perry County sheriff. He was active in the Newport Society, a debating or polemic society. The next journal entry shows Gantt's keen concern about temperance: "*1840 4 Feb.* Attended a temperance meeting in Newport and addressed it—41 persons signed the pledge." When a society called the Sons of Temperance organized a branch in New Bloomfield in 1846, Gantt became its president.⁸

Politics was another interest in Gantt's life. He had been a

delegate in 1836 to the Whig county convention.⁹ In 1840 he was attending the national ratification convention in Baltimore as a delegate when General William Henry Harrison was nominated for president.¹⁰ It was a moving experience for him, and he wrote about it at length for the editor of the Bloomfield newspaper, as he recorded in his journal. He heard such distinguished orators as Henry Clay and Daniel Webster speak, and marvelled at the huge parade:

1840 4 May. . . . Delegates were in attendance from every state in the union. . . . Early this morning the streets presented one dense mass of people. . . . moving towards the western part of the city to form in procession. Each state was headed by its own appropriate Banner and followed by the county delegations with their various banners. . . . Baltimore Street from one end to the other presented one grand gallery of beauty. The innumerable white handkerchiefs waved by fair hands, greeting each advancing person and returning loud cheers by the young Whigs to the smiles and bright faces from the windows, presents a scene of sublime grandeur which no pen can describe. . . . The procession was near three miles in length. . . . [some] say there were not less than thirty thousand in the line of procession.

On his tortuous way home from the Whig convention Gantt heard that his mother was ill:

11 May. Took passage on Canal Packet [commuter steamboat] for Columbia. . . and remained all night. Next day stage to Portsmouth and then cars to Harrisburg, thence Canal Packet to Newport, which reached in the night and hearing Mother was sick, hired a horse and passed on home. Found Mother struck down with paralysis, and unable to speak, but Friday she seemed to recognize me and reached out her left hand to me and shook mine.

17 May. At five minutes after 12 o'clock she expired. She lay about eight days from the time she received the paralytical stroke.

1841 4 April. President William H. Harrison died at Washington City, just one month after he took the oath of office. His memory will live in the hearts of the people.

1842 18 July. Addressed Temperance meeting in Liverpool.

[1842] *7 August.* Heard Rev. J. Porter of Phila., and Mr. Miller speak on the "end of time," and "Second advent." They attempted to show from Daniel & Revelations that the year 1843 would wind up the rounds of time.

Meanwhile Gantt had completed his study of law¹¹ and was to be examined:

1843 2 January. . . . The committee appointed by the court examined me in the presence of the Judge. . . for admission to practice law.

3 Jany. . . . On certificate & motion of the above committee was admitted to practice in all the Courts of law of the county.

3 May. I entered in to articles of co-partnership with Col. Ives Casey to practice law, until 1 April, 1844.

The end of 1843 did not "wind up the rounds of time," as foretold. Rather, it was the start of a new life for Daniel, as he wrote laconically of his marriage to a young woman who had not previously been mentioned in his journal: "[1843] *14 November.* Tuesday morning was married to Agnes T. Fulton,¹² by Rev. B.E. Collins."

Gantt neglected to write of the birth of their first child, Amanda Ellen, on October 3, 1844, or of the birth and death within three days of their second child, a son, in February, 1845. He did write about a quarrel between two factions of Democrats over how they would mourn the death of Andrew Jackson.

1845 19 June. After a temperance meeting held in the courthouse had adjourned at about 10 1/2 o'clock, Geo. Stroop, Editor of "Democrat," made a motion to "organize a Jackson meeting," as he called it. News had just recently reached our town that Andrew Jackson had died. . . . John D. Grilly [Grilley], Editor of another democratic paper, approved a meeting of that character at such a late hour, & without previous notice.

And I shall remark that the Democratic party of the county is divided into two factions—one known as the "Old Hunkers" and the other as the "Young Democracy" and are very bitter against each other. Stroop with his paper heads the Old Hunkers and Grilley with his paper the Young Democracy. . . . It was a fight as to which should be first in doing honor to the character of Andrew Jackson. . . . and a scene of confusion and rowdyism followed. . . . The fiery spirits of the Young Democracy could not be silenced by the blustering cries of order from the President. . . . This meeting seemed to break up in a row.

20 June. . . . They appointed a committee to secure a speaker "to preach a funeral sermon for Jackson."

24 June. Was fixed & set apart for the "funeral Sermon" and the "suspension of all business employment to *celebrate the illustrious death of Jackson.*" Tuesday [the] 24th arrived. Business was not suspended,—minute guns were not fired—the funeral Sermon was not "preached," no demonstrations of respect on account of the death of the Hero of New Orleans were manifest—The prediction of Junken seems to have been speedily fulfilled & verified, and Jackson was truly so soon forgotten by Democracy, the Jackson fever had so soon died out, the "regret" [mourning] seems to have been swallowed up as lost in the democratic fight over his grave, and not an individual kept this day as sacred to the memory of Jackson. "Sic transit gloria" Democracy.

1846 1 June. . . .Marantha was born.¹³

1851 6 January. . . .Mary Alice was born.

1853 4 Oct. Amos Evans was born.

In June of 1856 Gantt embarked on his first trip to the "far-famed west," as he called it. Along with two Bloomfield friends, he rode various trains and reached Chicago on the third day. A conveyance hired in Geneseo took him to see his brother Hiram, who had moved his family to Ohio in 1844. From Alton, Illinois, Gantt wrote on June 9 to the editor of the *Bloomfield Freeman* about his trip.¹⁴ At first he was critical of some things he saw:

Through Ohio, in many places are farmers planting their corn a second time, the first planting having failed to grow. The wheat crop generally looked well though. . . .through all that part of Ohio which we passed, there seems to be a great want of taste for neatness among the farmers, in laying out their farms. . . .Many old orchards which we passed show that the early settlers did not neglect the cultivation of fruit. . . .Through parts of Michigan and Indiana which we passed we found the greater portion of the land quite too flat. Some of it is a dreary, dismal wilderness; but some, and especially in Indiana is a fine agricultural and stockraising country. . . .A great portion of this road [railroad] is an abomination to ride on, for it was almost difficult at times to tell whether the cars were on the track or hopping over the hills. . . .

We reached St. Louis early on Saturday morning. It is no wonder that the Cholera with its terrible effects and depopulative influences so often visits this city. . . .The streets are more like little narrow gaugeways than streets, and are filled with filth of almost every

description. . . . The odor at places was insufferable to us as we passed along. If you ever intend visiting this city you should first accustom yourself to the use of the water from muddy ponds as your regular drink for here will get nothing but Sandy, muddy dirty water of the Miss river. . . . Yesterday we reached Alton. . . . The state prison is located here and contains a population of about five murder convicts. . . .

One of the best things I have seen in these western states is that as fast as the settlements are made, the School House and the selection of good teachers are among the first objects of attention; and I understand provision is made for sustaining the schools the most part of the year. It was truly gratifying as we passed these "Peoples Colleges" to see congregated there the youth of the country, receiving their first lessons in the sciences as well as in civilization and self government. May they prosper!

When Gantt reached Burlington, Iowa, he noticed a contrast between Iowans and Missourians:¹⁵

The remarkable difference in energy, industry and "go aheadativeness" between the people of northern Mo. and Iowa is incredible. It would rather seem impossible that within a few miles, on lands equally good, there should be such a marked difference. . . . The staging westward from Iowa City is extremely tedious and tiresome. It is said the western people are a fast nation and it is so in some respects, but in stage coach traveling they certainly have got on the extreme on the other side, so far as speed and comfort are concerned.

In regard to impertinent, uncivil, wicked & desperately profane stagedrivers. . . . One thing must be soon noticed by every visitor to this far western world, and that is the fact that the population is principally made up of bold, enterprising young men.

Despite uncivil stagecoach drivers Gantt was impressed by the wonders of the west:

Well, this western world is a great country—great in its vast oceans of green prairie—great in its vast fields of variegated flowers of nature dressed in all the loveliest attire—more grandly arrayed than Solomon in all his glory—great in the richness of its soil, in its agricultural advantages, and in its peculiar adaption for stock raising, and lastly great in the energy and "go aheadativeness" of its settler[s].

Gantt saw part of the historic migration of Mormons,¹⁶ for whose religious beliefs he had unkind words. At that time it was

not uncommon for non-Mormons to write jeremiaids against the Mormon church, a new sect founded in New York state in 1823. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("Mormon" is a pseudonym) had experienced persecution from the outset. They had been driven successively from their homes in Independence, Missouri (1838), and Nauvoo, Illinois (1846), and were at this time fleeing to Utah.

In my peregrinations I passed a company of Mormons. . . composed of over five hundred. . . on their pilgrimage to the land of promise. There were probably five females to one male and all traveling on foot, drawing with them some 200 handcarts loaded. This sight was indeed sickening to the refined mind. Here was seen a young girl from twelve to 20 years of age fastened to a hand cart, which she was compelled to draw to Utah, a work of some 3 or 4 months over the hot, burning plains! Here, was seen the old man, on his crutches, trudging along to the same place!

Also the little boys and girls not even four years of age were compelled to travel that long journey on foot, and all, the deluded victims of a set of vile, wicked corrupt, debauched devils in human shape, who know, and yet have no sympathy to feel for the awful cruelties they are inflicting for their own selfish purposes.

Having traveled over 3,000 miles in less than a month, Gantt returned to Pennsylvania late in June. The next journal entry indicated that life was back to its usual pattern, but not for long:

14 July. Mr. M. Fraly Emerson lectured in the court house on woman's rights. It was a coarse, low & rather indecent speech."

Evidently Gantt had contracted western fever, for on September 15 he set off with a friend on another journey west. In an amazing two days they reached Iowa City. They proceeded by stagecoach farther west until they arrived at Council Bluffs, Iowa, and crossed the Missouri River to Omaha in Nebraska Territory:

[1856] 24 July. Visited Florence and some part of the country surrounding Omaha, also an Indian burial ground where the famous chief Fontenelle's remains are entombed.

26 Sept. At Bellevue—a fine country surrounding it—rich and easy to cultivate. At this point were the old missionary grounds of the

Presbyterian church, among the Indians. The old buildings are yet standing although the Mission has been moved to the Blackbird Hills some 70 miles north.

27. (Saturday morning) Left—passed through Plattsmouth, after crossing the Platte river formerly called by the Indians the “Nebrasthka,” stopped over night at Buck’s, in the edge of a grove—had excellent accommodations in his log cabin—next day reached Nebraska City.

En route to St. Joseph, Missouri, the travelers encountered some of the men who fought slavery in Kansas:¹⁷

7 [October]. . . . Left Leavenworth in the Steam packet “Cataract” for Jefferson City, Mo. There were some 70 of the . . . men who were sent from the South to fight Slavery into Kansas. . . . on this Boat returning home. They were roughs and rowdies of the worst class, and kept up a clamor and tumult on the boat day and night, until we reached Jefferson City on the evening of the 10th. The “Cataract” was a ponderous steam boat and on our trip, made many sand bank “claims” in the river, holding us fast, at times, from two to twenty hours.

Upon his return home Gantt arranged his affairs in order to move west. During the winter he sold his property and wound up his business as far as possible:

1857 21 April. Left Newport¹⁸ with my family, and in company with twenty three others, going on a journey west, started west. Reached Petersburg the same day. I stopped at Agnes. Had put on board a boat all my material for a house and other goods.

23 April. We all went on board the Steamboat Cambridge for St Louis¹⁹ This day passed Wellsville, O., reached Wheeling [West] Va., in evening and remained there over night. Here was a heavy frost, & ice to thickness 1/4 inch. Saturday night reached Cincinnati. . . . Today passed North Bend the old house of Genl. Wm. H. Harrison. The place is handsome. The tomb of the old Chieftain is on a gradually Sloping Bluff, probably 150 feet high, and presents a fine view from the passing boats. Monday were two hours passing through the canal at Louisville, Ky. This evening reached Cannelton, a place of pretty extensive cotton manufacturing.

29 April. . . . Passed Cairo & floated out on the broad waters of the Mississippi river. At this point vegetation has scarcely made a start.

This afternoon passed up through a rapid current called the "Long Reach." It is an opening between long ranges of bluffs on each side.

30 [April]. Passed the Mo. State Hospital—which consists of a small dwelling house, and two rows of sheds, one story high—passed Jefferson Barracks in Mo. and in the evening reached St. Louis. Capt. Dean & Clerk Golding of the Cambridge were gentlemanly and courteous officers. Bought some furniture at St. Louis. . . .

3 May. Went on board the Steam boat Edenberg, and soon reached the Missouri river. We slowly passed up the Missouri river. . . .

13 May. We reached Omaha, in Nebraska. It was a tedious and unpleasant trip. The Capt. was not accommodating, unpleasant hands were rough, noisy and the mate was indeed a truly "hard case." Landed at Omaha in the midst of a violent storm of wind and rain & very cold. Stayed with my family two weeks at the hotel and then moved into a small place, until I could get the house put up. Settled in Saratoga 2 miles above Omaha.

This was an inauspicious arrival in the new land. That summer of 1857 Gantt was a candidate for the Nebraska Territorial Legislature, but he was defeated.²⁰ Omaha, which had been founded only three years earlier, consisted of a few hundred persons and some straggling buildings and huts. In this rough frontier setting sickness and tragedy soon struck the Gantt family:

1857 15 Oct. This night rain fell to depth of nearly eight inches. This season very sickly, and much in my family; and after a long illness, wife died this day from inflammation of the lungs.²¹

1 Dec. Started with children east by private conveyance across Iowa. At Iowa City took cars eastward. Spent winter in the east.

With the death of his wife, Gantt's carefully laid plans went awry. He probably couldn't conceive of keeping the children with him in Nebraska without Nancy, who would have supervised their education. So he took them all back to Pennsylvania, where he left the four older children with relatives. Within six months of Nancy's death he took a second wife, Harriet Cooper, who had been a friend of Nancy's and who was older than Daniel. She had taught some of the Gantt children in school in Perry County.²² In a hurry to pursue his dreams, Gantt took Harriet and his youngest child, 4-year-old Amos,

back to Omaha. He intended to send for the older children in a few months—certainly within a year.

Writing to his older children in the East from Omaha, Gantt obliquely tells them about their new step-mother and admonishes them to be good:²³

May 17, 1858

My Dear Children:

I should have written to you sooner, but I had no convenient way of doing so. . . . We are now living in the old house at Saratoga, but expect in a month or so to move into Omaha and live there this year, and open a law office.

I want you all to be very good children; obey Mrs. McKeehan²⁴ and do whatever she tells you, for I know she will be very good to you. You are not to go into town much, but you can occasionally go out to your Aunt Clouser's and spend Saturday night, but not very often, and sometimes over to your Uncle Jacob's and to Wesley's.²⁵

Amos E. is well, very lively and contented, and makes plays for himself all the day long. I want you to learn all you can, for I will after some time want to get you all with me, and you know there is not so good opportunities for schools in this western country. . . .

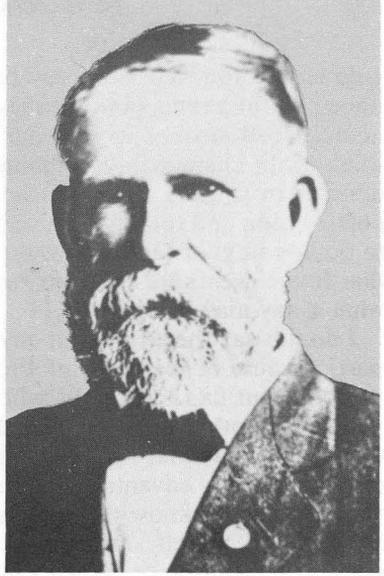
I suppose you have heard that Harriet Cooper has come with me to live. She is very kind to Amos, and he says she must not go away. Write to me soon. Your affectionate father, D. G.

As the excitement generated by the discovery of gold in Colorado swept into Omaha, Gantt wrote in his journal:

[1859] 11 May. The great "stampede" of emigrants to the gold mines, on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains, commenced. Large trains of them were on the road up the Platte Valley, and by reports of the mines being a humbug of robbery, starvation, riot and murder etc. propagated along the lines of moving emigrants, a terrible panic was produced. The tide of immigration turned back in thousands on the plains, and for some weeks after the emigrants turned back in a continual stream, disappointed, dissatisfied and exhibited much bad feeling.

September. . . . Persons of Omaha are now forming a company to go out [to the gold mines], and much excitement prevails.

Gantt did not write in his journal for three years, but he and Harriet did write letters to his children, who unfortunately were still in the East. Their stepmother, Harriet, wrote on February 9, 1859, to Amanda and Adlenia:²⁶



Agnes (Nancy) Fulton Gantt, first wife of Daniel Gantt. . . .(Right) Daniel Gantt.



Adlenia and Fulton Gantt, children of Daniel Gantt.

I do assure you that not a day passes without my thoughts dwelling upon you for a time, [and I] believe it to be your ardent desire to be at home. I feel anxious to see your wish realized by you, but, when I think of the changes in your home during the last few years, I cannot describe to you my feelings. Had anyone been endowed with a prophetic vision and told me two years ago the position that I was going to occupy in your family I would have thought them mad. Thus it is that future events are hid from me, and we may truly say we know not what a day may bring forth.

I do not say these things in any way as a sign of repentance on my part, because in the order of Providence I have been placed in this position, but had it been the will of our heavenly father to have left your dear Mother with you, I would feel much better satisfied. I speak truly when I say that I did not assume this position with the prospect of any worldly advantage to me. It was more for the benefit of yourselves. You know the friendship that existed between your dear Mother and myself. Death has not destroyed it. I still cherish a grateful remembrance. When I left Perry Co. it was my expectation that you would all be home in the fall, but [due to] the pressure of the times in many matters, it has not been in the power of your Papa to bring you as soon as was his wish, and intention. But I do hope providence may so change his condition that we may have you brought home soon.

Amos talks of you every day. . . . We have taught him at home so that he is beginning to read. . . . You wish to know what part of Omaha we live in. We are next door to the Tressent house, where you stopped when you came to the territory. The house we occupy has but four rooms in it and all down stairs. No person lives in the house at Saratoga. A number of houses have been brought down to Omaha from Saratoga. . . .

You wished to know if your dear Mother's grave is still in Saratoga. Yes, it is still there. The rain during summer caused it to sink considerably, but Mr. Guise filled it up. Amos and I often went to look at it when we lived there. The cemetery has not been laid out as to enable people to transfer their dead. It is likely your Papa intends waiting for that. . . . Affectionately yours, Harriet.

Gantt added this apologetic postscript to his wife's letter:

I very much desire you all with us, but if I can possibly make arrangements to do so, I will have you brought out early in the spring Business is still dull here, and you know I have put everything in real estate, and the times changing makes it hard now to sell. . . . Your affectionate Father, Dan. Gantt.

When the next spring came, Gantt was still unable to raise money to bring his three daughters and one son home. He wrote a letter to his children about his continuing financial difficulties on April 20, 1859:²⁷

We had hoped to get you all out here this spring, but the disappointment in my calculations, by reason of the financial revulsion and changes of time the past 2 years has put me in a position that I am tied fast and cannot yet realize anything out of investments. . . .

Read your Bibles a great deal and try to be better every day. You should not forget to look at your school books betimes and not only review what you have learned but always strive to learn some more. In all your deportment be very kind and obliging to everybody you meet, and be very careful not to give a word of offense to anyone. . . . I am in hopes times will get better out here soon. Mercantile business has improved very much already and the farmers are getting good prices for their produce. They have shipped from this place many thousands of bushels of corn and potatoes to St. Joseph and St. Louis, at good prices.

There are a great many immigrants going to the gold mines [of Colorado] through this place, and a large number there gone from our city and country around. There are not yet many coming to settle here. Not enough to make up for the number leaving for the gold mines. However many of those going from here intend to come back and settle here again after some time. Rev. Bergen started today to the mines as a missionary out there. There were considerable numbers of good citizens went with him. . . . The Kansas and Nebraska Methodists general conference met in this city last week on Thursday and continued in sessions until Monday afternoon, except Sunday. There were, I suppose, some fifty preachers present. . . .

The first steamboat arrived at this place this spring on the 5th day of March, and since that time there have been quite a number of arrivals. It seems a little strange that the amount of freight, goods, that is, shipped here already is large. Larger, it is said, than any former year.

On July 12, 1859, Gantt wrote his children that they could hear from him often through the letters he sent to the *Perry County Freeman* (newspaper), and told of trouble with the Indians:²⁸

In my last letter you will see that the Pawnee Indians have been making trouble. They have destroyed a very large amount of property, but I have not heard any news from the Elkhorn since I wrote, except that there are about 250 or 300 persons out there under arms, and under

Gen'l [John M.] Thayer and [Territorial] Governor [Samuel W.] Black.

Gantt sounded like a booster when he wrote his brother-in-law, Thompson Fulton, in Newport, Pennsylvania, November 14, 1859:²⁹

In this distant frontier land, where civilization has but recently been planted, and where society is in its formation period, there are many things to attract attention, excite the mind and occupy your thoughts, but amidst all these, a letter from friends left far away in my native land, is in some respects, like an oasis in a desert. . . .

I still like this country very well, but we have many people who are no advantage to any country. I think the climate, in general, is more pleasant than the east. True sometimes we have a hurricane wind-storm, but these I believe to be an advantage for they sweep away all miasma & promote the health of the country. . . .

I had fondly thought I would have got the other children out with us this fall, but it seems my fortune at present to be disappointed in this. The past crisis or reverse of times has thwarted all my calculations, as I have not sold one foot of the property since I came out. Although merchandising and farming improved much the past summer, yet real estate business has not revived to any extent. . . . My professional business does not yet scarcely pay a living. It cannot be expected to be very good in a new country, but is getting better, and from what I learn around, I have acquired a good position as one of the best in our profession. There are no first class lawyers among those I find here, but the great majority are indeed very poor ones.

I am now president of the Sulphur Spring Land Company, and attend to most of their business here. . . .

If I were not so much connected with real estate in this region, I might probably leave, for some of the leading men of Brownville City have urged me strongly to locate in their city to take a controlling influence in professional business and the interests of society generally Some of the most important causes [cases] in our court have been taken out of others hands and placed in mine; and if I succeed in these causes they will pay me a large fee.

The fact that the gold mines are permanent and productive in the west of our Territory, will certainly have much influence in advancing more rapidly the general business operations of this country. Miners are and have been for a time returning daily and nearly all are going back in the spring. The travel to and from the mine is now all on the Platte Valley, in our Territory, and this will help the country much, for all say it is the best and nearest route, and will therefore command all the trade hereafter.

On Christmas Day of 1859 Gantt wrote a plaintive letter to his children in Pennsylvania:³⁰

I would much rather see you all than write to you. . . .But I hope you will bear our misfortune with good cheer, be good children, [read] your Bibles much, and never forget prayers which you were taught so young.

The next spring brought no more success. Writing April 4, 1860, Gantt says:³¹

I would sacrifice any thing to get you with me again, if I could raise enough money by so doing. Harriet says she would willingly go some place to teach, but then to pay our board we would not gain any thing by her doing so. . . .

We are now living in a house for which I pay rent in professional services; the house at Saratoga is rented to two farmers, who are farming down on the bottom, in the bend of the River. . . .I have thought a great deal about the western country,³² and have looked at it all over in reference to the future prospects and business, and I do not think there is any part of all the west, including Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa & Illinois, that has as good prospects for the future as the region of the Platte Valley in Nebraska. But it seems to take [a] longer time than I expected to recover from the past crisis. The great scarcity of money is what keeps back all business. What money there is in the country the merchants seem to get nearly all, and in our city they did well in the past year.

Some new settlers are coming into the Territory this spring. There are now many emigrants going to the gold mines. They are coming into our city every day, and many have their families with them. For some five weeks past there has been a daily union prayer meeting in our city. They meet in one of the churches every evening, and part of the time also at ten o'clock in the day time. The Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans & Baptists have all united in these meetings, and all the ministers of these different denominations attend these meetings regularly. The meetings are still continued and are doing some good; and indeed a great reformation is much needed in the place.

It was nearly two and a half years since Gantt had seen his four older children when he wrote to them August 27, 1860:³³

It grieves me very much that I cannot have you brought home at onceMoney is so scarce that I cannot [can] get paid for but little, or [a] small portion of the business I do.

I hope you will try to be as contented as possible, and try to improve your time. Do you spend much of your leisure time in study? Do you read your Bible much? I hope you will attend to these things, and not spend your time in wasting it. . . . I wish you would write me long letters. Write to me all the news. What books are you reading? How much do you study? How tall have you grown? And anything you can think about. For it is a great satisfaction to me to read your letters, and I read them over several times. I even sometimes almost think I am talking with you when I read your letters.

Tragedy is revealed in the next letter Gantt wrote to Adlenia:³⁴

The sad and sorrowful news of our dear Amanda's death reached me some three days past & I have tried ever since to write to you, but could not compose my mind to do so. The stroke is indeed a hard one, but we must submit to Him who doeth all things well; who giveth and taketh away, and in whose hands we are every moment of our lives.

I feel greatly for you and your little brother and sister, for the loss, just at this time under our circumstances, I know is great to you all: your eldest sister and companion is gone. She went in the morning of life while the winning charms of youth played upon her countenance, and when the guileless innocence of her amiable character was yet unstained by the rough blasts and corrupting influences of the world around us. She went in the morning of the day ere the dews had gone to Heaven or the stars had scarcely gone to rest in the invisible ethereal spheres, while the birds were singing their early song, and the cool winds were blowing, when the flowers were in bloom that would be shut at noon, and the shadows inlaid with crimson laid away to the west.

She has gone in the innocence of youth. Although these thoughts fleeting through my mind, may be well calculated to soften sorrow and point our minds upwards after our beloved one, who has been so much interwoven in our affections and in all our thoughts and enjoyments here on earth; but my dear child I do hope and intreat you not to permit this affliction to press too heavily on your mind.

Do not permit grief, under our circumstances, to take hold of you or undermine your health, but rather try and bear up under our loss and make life cheerful, buoyant, agreeable and happy to yourself and those around you. It is surely some satisfaction that you were with Amanda in her last hours here; she had your sympathies, your care and attention, and I know you did your duty as a young loving sister; but I was deprived of being present, and this fact rings in my mind day and night. If I had been present with her the shock would not have

come so suddenly or with such affecting power. I received the news in the morning mail, and on that day I scarcely knew what I was about—Mother certainly did not know what she was about the most of the day, and scarcely the next day, and still complains much of a pain in the chest produced by the shock so sudden and unexpected.

I desire you to get all Amanda's letters, papers and books and whatever things she may have had, and take them all into your care and preserverness [preservation]—what was the disease—and all you know up till her death and burial. State if Alice was present—also Fulton.

Malinda E. Gantt wrote to Daniel on November 1, 1860, describing Amanda's fatal illness:³⁵

Dear friend, Although you have not written a line to us since Amanda's death came so suddenly upon us, I must take my pen and write a few words to you relative to her death. She took sick with a diarrhea and appeared to have a pretty high fever. I did all I could for her but she got no better. We then sent for a physician. He pronounced her disease Bilious Fever and Diarrhea combined. He attended her daily, and soon pronounced her out of danger. She was able to be up and about all the time until the day before she died. On Saturday (just one week from the commencement of the illness) she sat up and read. The doctor left her on this evening with the best hopes for her speedy recovery.

On Sunday morning she took worse, calling for water very frequently. We brought the physician immediately. He stated the cause of her sudden change, her menstrual period had come upon her, and her disease interfering, had placed her beyond human aid. All that could be done, was done for her, but on the next morning she died. She was sensible to the last.

Joseph [another brother of Daniel Gantt] brought Adlenia and Fulton over to see her on Sunday. We got them persuaded to let Adlenia stay, but they took Fulton along home again in the evening. Adlenia was with her until she was buried. Alice did not get to see her until after she was dead.

Aunt Mary³⁶ would like very much to have Adlenia to live with her. She would take her, keep her, and teach her the millinery & mantua [loose gown or cloak] making. She would like to know if you would give Adlenia leave to go from Wesley's to her. . . . Respectfully yours, Malinda E. Gantt. P.S. Enclosed I send sample of her shroud, trimming & a lock of her hair.

Gantt described business and school conditions when he next

wrote to his brother-in-law, R. Thompson Fulton, on November 26, 1860:³⁷

Amos has not had any sickness and he grows rapidly. He went to school some, but did not improve any, and was being spoiled in his mode of reading and spelling, and partly for this reason, we have kept him at home, and Mrs. Gantt has been studying every day with him. He now reads quite well for his age, and gets along well in his other studies. The teachers of our schools seem to be considerably behind the age of improvement in the art of teaching.

In a pecuniary point of view I have not succeeded as well as I expected. One great drawback was the financial crisis which came on the same year after I came to this new country, and which suspended all general business operations, and even up to the present there is nothing doing in real estate business or in making investments—all is quiet, except the entering of lands, to some extent by land warrants. The farm business has improved considerably, though owing to the long drouth, the crops in our region were short. The wheat ranged from ten to twenty five bushels to the acre. In the northern part of the Territory the crops were excellent & very productive. There has grown up a large trade between this city and the mountain mines.

Large freight trains leave frequently, besides the single ones which leave almost daily. Some of her merchants have done a large transporting business. You would be astonished to see the number of teams engaged in the business of transporting freights. You might, during the past season, have traveled the Platte Valley for the distance of over five hundred miles, and you would not have passed a day without being in company with the trains on the road, and you would have often seen them stretched along the road in one nearly solid train for the distance of a day's travel.

The mercantile trade has grown to very large proportions at this point, and from present indications it may be much larger next season. . . . The emigration and mountain markets now make this country one of the best for farmers. All agricultural products command a good price, and very little trouble, comparatively to raise them. Flour has never sold here for less than \$6 to \$8 per barrel. Corn always commands a good price in the spring, but if a large crop of potatoes are raised they will not command so apparently a fair price. I will say however, that potatoes, when a good crop, can be in this country made a more profitable crop at 25 cents per bushel than in the east at 50 cents.

The Chinese sugar cane [sorghum] does well here, and some of our farmers have begun to cultivate it. The molasses manufactured from it sells at 50 to 60 cents per gallon.³⁸

The law profession does not pay well in this country. There is some business, but the most of it. . . .is with persons who have become tied up by the crisis, and cannot yet make any thing available, and therefore cannot pay. I have not received pay for one fourth of the business I have done. This system of business has kept me very economical to get along. It has rendered me unable all the time to get the children home, and it seems to me. . . .like an age since I have seen them.

I intend making a vigorous effort to secure an appointment under the administration of Lincoln. I shall apply for Judge of the 3rd Judicial District, and if I succeed it will place me in a much better situation and enable me to do for the children as I wish to do. . . .

The Telegraph has been in operation to our city since last September, and now extends to Fort Kearny, 185 miles west of this city. On the next morning after the Presidential election, we received the news from all the eastern, middle & western states, and some of the southern states, & learned Lincoln was elected. On the morning of the 8th this news was 200 miles west of Fort Kearny by Pony Express. Is not this a fast country? This express is a great feature of the present age.

A man mounts his pony and rides 100 miles (in about ten hours) before he stops to rest. He has a fresh pony ready at every 25 miles, and this is the way they travel from Missouri river to California. Each rider travels 100 miles & must do this in about ten hours & this travel is day and night. Not long since one rider traveled his 100 miles eastward, and owing to cause, was compelled to return with the western Express. He therefore, without rest, took the back track, and ran over the same route. You would think a ride of 200 miles on horseback, without any time to rest, was a tolerably good job of work, but this is western life.

The Stage has come through from Denver to our city in less than five days, loaded with mail and passengers. The distance is nearly six hundred miles. . . .The mail from this point to Denver is semi-weekly, also an Express with it. The Express on each trip brings considerable amounts of gold—sometimes twenty and thirty thousand dollars at a time. Returned miners bring with them large sums, but we cannot correctly estimate what has been brought in—no doubt some hundreds of thousands. The purchases by Bankers in this city have for some time averaged from five to ten thousand dollars per week.

In March, 1861, Gantt was elected city treasurer of Omaha and served for three years.³⁹ A letter written to his children, dated June 20, 1861, contained complaints about the President's appointments:⁴⁰

I received your letter some days past and would have written to you sooner, but I was busy engaged in some cases in our Supreme Court and could not think of anything else. I am now through with that business. I had hoped to have you all home with us again this time but it seems one misfortune after another is our lot: I did not receive the position I expected under the government. The President has seen fit to send men to fill our Judiciary who appear very deficient in the first elements of jurisprudence, and so we have forced on us Judges who are not at all competent to fill the positions, while a number of much better legal men in our territory are cast aside. . . . Our city is generally healthy, but there are a few cases of smallpox in the town. . . .

Our city now has quite a military appearance. Every day we hear the rattling of drums, the shrill notes of the fife and the music of the brass band, Sundays included, and our streets are every day bristling with bayonets. Several United States companies are quartered in our city and others are forming; and I suppose they will remain here for some time to drill. One company is quartered next door to my office, and in the evening they make the welkin [heavens] ring with their national songs. I do not know where the soldiers will be sent, but suppose some of them will be sent to the frontier forts and some may be sent to Missouri State to fight the traitors there. I suppose you have heard that the Governor of Missouri has commenced war against the United States.⁴¹

They have stopped our mail and telegraph news the past week, but I think we will have all right in a short time as the United States troops under General Curtis have taken possession of the Hannibal and St. Joe Railroad and now have it guarded. . . . [Samuel R.] Curtis has a small army with him at St. Joe. The soldiers have shot four men attempting to disturb the railroad. General [Nathaniel] Lyon has taken Jefferson City, and the traitor Governor of Missouri has fled to Boonville where the last news I heard, he was fortifying himself. I hope they will catch him and hang him at once.⁴²

I will send this letter by way of Iowa City. . . as the mails are still uncertain across Missouri. . . .

I am struggling in every way I can to hasten the time when I can get you all home. This is the great object I am waiting for. It seems like an age almost since I have seen you. Many times when I sit in the door in the evening, I almost imagine I see you all playing around me as I used to see you, but I soon awake from the reverie to more deeply realize your absence.

Later in 1861 Gantt explains in a letter to Adlenia⁴³ how his investments failed. For such a devout churchman as Daniel, it was a cruel blow that the swindler was a minister of God:

I would have got along perhaps very well, but like hundreds of others in this country, I have lost heavily, and will now give you some account of my losses. You will recollect the preacher, Wm. Young Brown. He turned out to be one of the greatest villains that ever came to this country. I lost investments by his villainy to the amount of about three thousand dollars. He was the principal man in a company organized; and principally through his influence investments were made in lands and improvements to an amount over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

After he made all he could, he turned round and hired men to go upon the lands and file caveats in the Land Office against the titles obtained from the government, and by his villainy and false swearing and that of his hirelings, succeeded in breaking the titles and swept all this property away from the innocent purchasers who had invested their money in it. He made a contract with the reckless men he hired to prosecute the matter for them and they were to give him one-half of all the property. Besides this great swindling, he swindled the company out of large sums of money. Through his rascality my friend, Tuttle from New York, lost twenty thousand dollars, and is now a poor man. Mr. McAlpin of Pittsburgh lost about sixteen thousand dollars.

We fought the matter to the bitter end, but we have no doubt Brown had bribed and bought all the principal officers, who had the matter to decide, and by such means obtained their decisions. Brown left the country some two years past and has not been back since for fear he would be lynched. I understand he has been teaching in Shippensburg, Cumberland County, some time past. The Presbytery of Nebraska, notwithstanding his great rascality in many things, sent him a certificate last spring of good character and allowed him to preach and impose on other people.

We recently had a destructive fire which swept over a great portion of our Territory. The wind blew almost like a hurricane for two or three days and a vast amount of property was burnt. Two or three fine churches were burnt; many thousand dollars worth of grain, hay and fences were burnt, and in some instances the family had nothing left but the clothes on their back; and in the great conflagration I lost investments in large amount. . . .

I sent a list of fees due me to Jos. Don Gantt⁴⁴ some years ago and I understand that he has put it in the hands of H. G. Milans in Bloomfield. There is over three hundred dollars on it which ought to have been paid long ago. . . . I wish you would see Milans and get him to collect some for you. . . . enough to bring you all home in the spring. I will enclose an order to him to pay you. . . . But independent of this. . . . I am using every effort to get you all home as soon as I possibly can. If you can get some money from Milans, first get some good clothes for you and Fulton.

On April 1, 1862, Gantt wrote to Adlenia, noting that the first steamboat had arrived after the breakup of river ice. He complained again in a letter written to Adlenia on June 26, 1862,⁴⁵ about the judicial system:

I did not want to write until after the time of meeting of our Supreme Court. . . and we had no court—the people all being absent except one, and he could not hold court by himself. . . . Our District Court should have been held in April last by reason of there being no court. Our judge was away and is still absent. I am “Master of Chancery,” and I had cases before me out of which I expected to receive enough fees to bring you all home before this time. These fees I cannot draw until we have court, so that I can get my Master’s Reports confirmed. When our District will meet I can form no idea now. We may have a special term before the next regular term in the fall.

You will see that in all my calculations I have been sadly disappointed by reason of our Judges being absent, and consequently having no Courts when we should have them. If President Lincoln cannot select better and more punctual judges for our Territory he would much better remove those he did appoint, and leave the Territory without any, and then the people would [take] care of themselves and make their own judges. . . .

Our country is generally very healthy. It would have been surprising to you to have seen the large amount of immigration passing here this spring to the west. For many weeks it was one continual stream of wagons and people, and still some going.

In the summer of 1863 Gantt again was a candidate for the Territorial Legislature, and this time he was elected.⁴⁶ It was a good year for him, for at last he was able, six years after their mother’s death, to send money to Adlenia and Fulton to enable them to join him. In a long letter written November 16, 1863, Gantt gave his “dear children” instructions for traveling west.⁴⁷ The journey would take longer than when he had traveled west in 1857 and would involve travel on steamboat, railroad, and stagecoach:

I am much pleased to be able to inform you that I have just succeeded in making arrangements for your return home. I send you enclosed a draft for one hundred dollars. . . . I suppose your Uncle Jesse Gantt will go with you to Harrisburg to get the money and while at Harrisburg you will get through tickets from there to Omaha, Nebraska, by way of Pittsburgh, Chicago, Quincy, Hannibal and St. Joseph. . .



Adlenia Gantt and husband John Chalfant, Plattsmouth. . . (Above right) Adlenia Gantt Chalfant and son John Jr. . . (Below) Adlenia and sister, Mary Alice Gantt Rorebeck.



I think you and Fulton can perhaps get your passage through for one and a half tickets you both being so young.⁴⁸ Do you and Uncle Jesse try to get your passage on these terms. The fare for one passenger is \$40—for half price for Fulton; it will take \$60 for both of you. . . .

At Chicago the cars will run into the Rock Island Depot where you start for Quincy. If a ticket for the Omnibus to pass from one depot to the other is not given you in the cars, you will inquire for the Omnibus which transfers through passengers from the Depot to the other. Having through checks for your baggage you need not look after it until you reach St. Joseph. . . .

At Quincy on the Mississippi River you will go on steamboat to Hannibal. I don't know, but I suppose when you get off the cars you will have to walk from the Depot to the boat, and be sure you still keep together. The steamboat will take you to Hannibal where you will take the cars to St. Joseph. You will most likely get into St. Joseph in the forepart of the night, and when the cars stop & you get out you will ask for the Omnibus to the Pattee House, for you have to stay overnight there. . . .

In the morning about 8 o'clock you will take the cars for Savannah [Missouri] & be sure to have your baggage put on, for now you will have to see after it yourselves. At Savannah you will take the stage to Council Bluffs and Omaha. The stage mostly gets in Council Bluffs in the evening in time for passengers to cross to Omaha in a mail coach which leaves Council Bluffs about 5 o'clock in [the] evening. Hence, as soon as you stop at the Pacific House inquire for the evening coach to Omaha, & if it is not gone you can come on it; otherwise you would have to stay at the Bluffs till next morning. Until you reach St. Joseph you will have to get such meals as you want at places the cars stop. At St. Joseph you stay all night & will perhaps get supper and breakfast there—at any rate you will take your breakfast before you leave. Afterwards the stage stops for meals. You can, when you start, take some eatables in a carpet bag, so that you can get along for two or three days without getting out of the cars at every meal time.

One thing I want you both to particularly observe all the journey . . . is that neither of you at any time on the cars when they are going stand on the *platform*. Most all the accidents on Railroads occur by so doing. . . . It will take you about six days to come through. . . . When you come to Omaha tell the coachman to drive to my place at once, on the bank north of Herndon House and east of the government Corral.

There were further admonitions to Adlenia and Fulton to dress very warmly, to be cautious with their money, and to write to let their father know when they were leaving. They were advised to leave as soon as possible before severe winter weather

set in. Their younger sister, Mary Alice, is not mentioned. She must have stayed with the relatives who had taken her in.⁴⁹

At the same time that his family became more complete with the arrival of his two children, Gantt's professional and political careers improved. As a member of the House in the ninth session of the Territorial Legislature,⁵⁰ he was on two committees: accounts and expenditures and internal improvements. He voted for a resolution petitioning Congress for an enabling act to form a state government, for a resolution favoring Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, for a bill for the relief of Union soldiers' families, and for a bill to take a territorial census.⁵¹ These were the basic Republican measures before the House.

His legislative career was terminated in four months when Gantt received a presidential appointment as district attorney. He had not sought it at the time, but he must have yearned for it earlier. He wrote in his journal:

1864 10 May. By commission from President Abraham Lincoln I was appointed United States attorney for the Territory of Nebraska. I knew nothing of this matter, nor had any knowledge that the former atty. was about to resign, until I received word from Washington of my appointment. The late atty. was absent from the Territory, and during the April Sessions of the Court at Omaha, and the Sessions at Nebraska City. . . .by request & appointment by the Judges of the Districts I officiated as Atty. for the U.S.; and about the end of the Court Sessions my Commission arrived.

In attending the courts, I had to go twice each year to Falls City, at the Southern side of the Territory, and twice a year to the northern Side, there being three districts in the Territory.

One of Gantt's achievements as US attorney was to prosecute lottery swindlers and bring them to justice.⁵² The next entry in his journal, after a lapse of nearly three years, was recorded when Nebraska became a state:

1867 1 March. Pursuant to constitution formed by the people and act of Congress, by the proclamation of the President of the U.S. Nebraska was admitted as one of the States of the U.S., and as I did not go to Washington, or make the effort to retain the office of U.S. Atty. for the State. Genl. S. A. Strickland was appointed under the State organization, and arrived at Omaha on the last of May 1867, to which time I attended the U.S. business &c. Genl. Strickland came into my office, and for several months afterwards I instructed

him and his partner in the matters of the duties of the U.S. Atty.

During the time I served as U.S. Atty., of the several hundred Indictments drawn by me, there was only one quashed & one count in another by the court, although many of these indictments were attacked by the various attys of the territory, and in civil cases of the U.S. there was not one successful effort to impeach or strike from the record any of my pleadings.

In 1868 Gantt moved his family to Nebraska City. He obviously felt opportunities for practicing law were greater there:

1868 8 June. Having some two years past [decided to settle in southern Nebraska] and having sold my property in Omaha, and got my business in such shape as to be able to leave, on this day, with my family & furniture went aboard Steam Packet, and about 11 [o'clock] this night reached Nebraska city.

27 June. Having purchased House & 3 lots. . .went Keeping House again.

Several entries in the journal describe the ravages of fire, a frontier hazard due to heating methods used, lack of readily available water, and unprofessional firefighting equipment:

1870 24 Nov. . . .Fire burnt down my office in Neb. City, & 3 business houses—saved my Library & papers.

1871 8 Oct. . . .Big fire commenced in City of Chicago.

[1871] 28 November. . . .Burnt my hands, face &c, badly by explosion. . . .Confined to room 3 months.⁵³

The summer of 1872⁵⁴ Gantt was nominated by the Republican convention for associate justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court. He was elected that fall, and assigned to the southern district, the largest in the state.⁵⁵ At that time supreme court justices also made the circuit of the various counties, meeting at stated times in the capital, Lincoln, to sit as the supreme court.⁵⁶

In 1875 a new state constitution was adopted which provided for district judges, relieving the supreme court judges of circuit-riding duties. Under this constitution Daniel again was elected associate justice in 1875.⁵⁷

Three years later—January, 1878—Daniel was named chief justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court.⁵⁸ However, he sat at the pinnacle of his career for only four months. He died on May 29, 1878, at his Nebraska City home. He was 63 years old.⁵⁹

Aside from his home, Gantt left little property. What he did leave was an honorable and enduring record and reputation.⁶⁰ He has been considered one of the founders of Nebraska's jurisprudence, both for enacting and administering its laws and for forming its constitutions and shaping its policy.⁶¹

A few days before his death, Gantt was asked if he did not think a recent decision of his would elicit opposition. He replied: 'I care not for that, for I think I founded my decision upon correct principles.'⁶²

An editorial⁶³ about Justice Daniel Gantt's death concluded: "The most fitting tribute from our pen to the memory of the deceased chief justice would be an inscription on his tomb of the motto: 'An honest man is the noblest work of god!'"

NOTES

1. J. S. Morton and Albert Watkins, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Co., 1918), 696.

2. H. H. Hain, *History of Perry County, Pennsylvania*, (Harrisburg, Pa.: Hain-Moore Co., Publishers, 1922), 677.

3. *Ibid.*, 678.

4. Journal of Daniel Gantt, 2, Nebraska State Historical Society.

5. Hain, *History of Perry County*, 678.

6. Journal of Daniel Gantt, 3.

7. John Winebrenner was the founder of the Church of God.

8. Hain, *History of Perry County*, 679.

9. Journal of Daniel Gantt, 3.

10. William Henry Harrison's campaign of 1840 was one of the most emotional in American history. His Whig supporters "wore coonskin caps, built campaign log cabins in almost every town of consequence and freely dispensed hard cider to the voters, who were persuaded that Harrison had saved the country from untold Indian atrocities [at the battle of Tippecanoe, November 7, 1811]." Wayne Andrews and Thomas C. Cochran, (eds.), *Concise Dictionary of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 947.

11. "Through most of the nineteenth century legal training was acquired by clerking in the office of a lawyer admitted to the bar." Phyllis H. Stocks, *Better Than Rubies* (G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1978), 192.

12. Agnes Thompson Fulton, of Scotch-Irish ancestry, was called Nancy. A school teacher in Springfield, Pennsylvania, she shared Gantt's concern with education, temperance, and religion, according to letters written to her sisters and mother.

13. This was the third child born to Daniel and Agnes Gantt and was named Adlenia Marantha. The fourth child (unrecorded in Gantt's journal), Thompson Fulton, born January 31, 1848, was the first son to survive. Another child, their seventh and a girl, died in 1855, five days after birth.

14. Daniel recorded this on page 7 of his journal with the notation that he had sent it to the *Freeman*.
15. Journal of Daniel Gantt, 29, dated June 16, 1856.
16. *Ibid.*, 33-34. It may have been in the vicinity of Des Moines, Iowa; Gantt was not specific.
17. Civil war broke out in Kansas in late spring of 1856. "Border Ruffians" joined Kansas proslavery men.
18. Newport was on the Juniata River.
19. The Ohio River was the thoroughfare to the Missouri River.
20. *Beatrice Express*, Oct. 14, 1857, 2.
21. Agnes was 37 years old when she died. "Inflammation of the lungs" was probably pneumonia.
22. Letter from Harriet Cooper, July 12, 1859, in possession of Betty Wolfe Redfield, Lusk, Wyoming.
23. Letter in possession of Mrs. Phyllis Yost Stilwell, Lincoln, Nebraska.
24. Daniel Gantt's nephew, Isaiah, married Margaret A. McKeehan.
25. Jacob was a brother of Daniel Gantt and Wesley a brother-in-law. "Aunt Clouser" Daniel's sister, Agnes, was married to David Clouser.
26. Letter in possession of Louise Johnston, Spearfish, South Dakota.
27. Letter in possession of Betty Wolfe Redfield.
28. *Ibid.* The Pawnee had accepted reservation status in 1857 but continued to harass travelers. "In the spring of 1859 [they] caused general alarm in the Elkhorn Valley, forcing many settlers to abandon their cabins. The territorial militia [headed by General John M. Thayer] was called out, but the Pawnee gave up the offending braves without a struggle and promised to keep the peace." James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 137-138.
29. Letter in possession of Betty Wolfe Redfield.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. Added to above letter of April 7, 1860.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Amanda died at the age of 15. Letter of September 28, 1860, in possession of Sarah Nichols, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.
35. Malinda Gantt was the wife of Hannaniah, Gantt's older brother.
36. Gantt's unmarried sister Mary had a millinery shop in Bloomfield, Pennsylvania.
37. Letter in possession of Betty Wolfe Redfield.
38. In the late 1850s Chinese sugar cane or sorghum was introduced into the Trans-Missouri region. White sugar was then scarce and expensive, and refined sorghum or molasses provided sweetening for frontier families. A good yield from the crop was 80 to 100 gallons of sorghum per acre planted.
39. *Nebraska Daily Press*, August 28, 1897, 4.
40. Letter in possession of Sarah Nichols.
41. When Missouri became a theater of the Civil War, Governor Claiborne F. Jackson tried to lead the state out of the Union and failed.
42. Samuel Ryan Curtis resigned from his third term in Congress to become colonel of the 2nd Iowa early in 1861. He was made a brigadier general in May and commanded the large camp of instruction near St. Louis. Ryan held various Missouri commands during the war. Nathaniel Lyon, serving as a captain of the 2nd US Infantry at the St. Louis arsenal in early 1861, helped safeguard Union property from Southern sympathizers in Missouri. Promoted to brigadier general, he was sent to southwest Missouri, where he was killed August 10, 1861, at Wilson's Creek. Mark Mayor Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959), 215, 497-498.
43. Letter dated December 5, 1861, in possession of Betty Wolfe Redfield.

44. Joseph Don L. Gantt, son of Daniel Gantt's brother, Hannaniah.
45. Letter in possession of Betty Wolfe Redfield.
46. *Portrait and Biographical Album of Otoe and Cass Counties, Nebraska* (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1889), 1223-1224.
47. Letter in possession of Sarah Nichols.
48. Adlenia was 17 and Fulton was nearly 16, not young for half fares!
49. Mary Alice was not mentioned in letters or journals until October 4, 1869, when she married A. C. Rorebeck in Omaha (Gantt's journal).
50. Sessions began January 7, 1864, House Journal, Ninth Session.
51. *Ibid.*, 61, 82, 98, 136, 234.
52. *Omaha Weekly Bee*, June 5, 1878, 2.
53. Another fire was recorded in Gantt's journal in 1868: a young attorney, A. E. Brooks, died from burns caused by the explosion of an oil can while he was pouring oil on coal in his office stove.
54. The last entry Daniel made in his journal, June 6, 1872, told of a terrible rain storm.
55. *Grand Island Independent*, Nov. 6, 1871, 4.
56. Morton and Watkins, *History of Nebraska*, III, 127, 174.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Weekly Nebraska State Journal*, June 7, 1878, 2.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*
61. Morton and Watkins, *History of Nebraska*, 696. "The first five judges [of the first state court], Lake, Crouse, Mason, Gantt, and Maxwell, had all served as members of the territorial legislature, and all except Gantt as members of from one to three constitutional conventions. So it may well be said of this group of five founders of Nebraska's jurisprudence, that they assisted in all parts of the task of laying the foundation of the state, both enacting and administering its laws, forming its constitutions and shaping its policy."
62. T. M. Marquett, in *Proceedings in the Supreme Court of Nebraska on the Death of Hon. Daniel Gantt, Chief Justice, July Term, 1878* (Lincoln: State Journal).
63. *Omaha Bee*, June 5, 1878, 2.