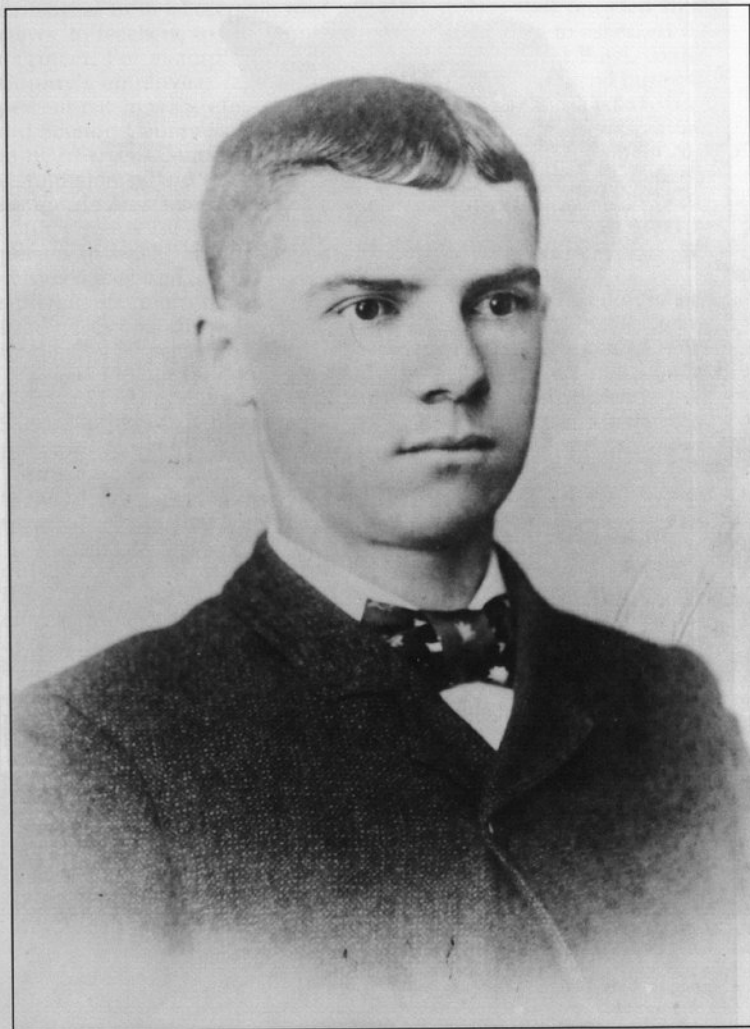


NO VILLAINS

The David Eisenhower —

by Thomas Branigar



David J. Eisenhower, ca. 1883

In March 1885, two young men, David J. Eisenhower and Milton D. Good, established a general merchandise store in the little town of Hope in southern Dickinson County, Kansas. Although a seemingly insignificant venture and one not beyond the boundaries of the ordinary, their partnership prompted an unusual controversy over the last half century—a controversy in which the facts have been both ignored and distorted.

As is often the case in business, problems eventually arose between the two partners, and in less than two years the Good-Eisenhower partnership was dissolved. In October 1888, David Eisenhower left Hope and obtained a railroad job at Denison, Texas. He was followed within a few months by his wife, Ida, and their two infant sons Arthur and Edgar. While the family was in Texas a third son Dwight was born. In early 1892, the Eisenhowers returned to Dickinson County and settled in Abilene where David went to

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NO HEROES

Milton Good Controversy

work for the Belle Springs Creamery. David and Ida spent the rest of their lives in Abilene, and their sons grew to adulthood in that community.

Because their Texas-born son eventually became President of the United States, the lives of David and Ida Eisenhower have received considerable scrutiny from historians, thereby focusing unusual attention on a failed business partnership in a little Kansas town. The standard account of the Hope store is that Milton Good was responsible for the failure of the partnership—that he drove the store to the brink of bankruptcy through poor business practices. He then disappeared from Hope, never to be seen again, leaving David to face their creditors alone. Humiliated by his partner's betrayal, David left Hope to seek work in Texas.

A careful examination of this story reveals that it is based primarily on Eisenhower family tradition which was not recorded by historians until many years after the event. Not unique to the Eisenhowers, many family histories rely on oral traditions which often are embellished as they are passed along from one generation to the next. Younger generations, as well as many historians, repeat the traditions in the belief that they represent the entire story.



Milton D. Good, ca. 1882

The story of the Good-Eisenhower partnership was first published around the end of World War II. As one might expect, the information is not without bias. After Dwight D. Eisenhower achieved international fame as supreme allied commander in Europe, writers produced popular accounts of his life, the most thorough research being that of Kenneth S. Davis, a journalist at Kansas State University in Manhattan. In 1944, Davis traveled to Abilene to seek out firsthand information on Eisenhower's background. Although David Eisenhower had died in 1942, his widow was still living in the family home on Southeast Fourth Street, and David's older sister Amanda Musser and her husband, Christian O. Musser, were also living near Abilene. Davis spent several days in the area interviewing the Mussers who provided him with extensive information on the Eisenhower family history. Through additional interviews with Ida Eisenhower and others who had known Dwight as a child, Davis was able to compile a detailed account of the general's childhood and family background.¹

Davis' book, *Soldier of Democracy*, was published in 1945, and within six years Ida and the Mussers were dead; no further interviews were possible. The book quickly became the definitive work on the early history of the Eisenhower family and was cited by most later writers. It was Davis who first publicized the story of Milton Good's misdeeds, writing that in the fall of 1888 Milton left Hope "in something of

a hurry," and David Eisenhower was left to face their creditors.²

Additional statements concerning the Hope store came from the children of David and Ida Eisenhower; at least two of their sons, Edgar and Dwight, left published accounts denouncing Milton Good as responsible for the failure of the store. Since these sons were born after Good's departure, they could not have spoken from personal knowledge but merely had repeated the stories of older members of the family.³

Unfortunately, historians have accepted these statements without further checking their accuracy. Additional research, however, indicates that Milton Good was not a villain as Eisenhower family tradition claims, and that the events surrounding the dissolution of the Good-Eisenhower partnership were not as described in the traditional account. Further, recently discovered legal documents pertaining to Good's business affairs have shed light on his activities after he left Hope, and permit a reassessment of his relations with David Eisenhower.

The grand opening of the Good & Eisenhower store in Hope occurred March 30, 1885.⁴ Eisenhower family tradition claims, and contemporary legal documents prove, that the store was largely the initiative of the Eisenhower family.

David J. Eisenhower was born in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, in 1863, the son of Jacob and Rebecca Eisenhower. Prominent members of the Brethren in Christ Church, the Eisenhowers, and a number of other Brethren families, moved to Dickinson County, Kansas, in 1878 and settled in the Belle Springs area about ten miles southeast of Abilene. Jacob invested in real estate and was able to greatly increase his net worth in the years following his move to Kansas.⁵ His descendants later claimed that Jacob gave a 160-acre farm to each of his children when they got married.⁶

David, however, was not interested in farming. Instead, he briefly studied engineering at Lane University in Lecompton before deciding to go into business in the small southern Dickinson County town of Hope. Founded in the late 1870s, Hope grew slowly at first, but its development was greatly stimulated when the Topeka, Salina and Western Railroad was built through the area in 1885. Jacob Eisenhower owned property in Hope and built a house there in 1884 where the family lived for several years.⁷ He also owned a vacant lot on Main Street, and to help David start his business, Jacob mortgaged the farm he had planned to give to David and used the money to build a store on the Main Street property.⁸ Since David had never managed

5. *Abilene Gazette*, December 28, 1883.

6. Davis, *Soldier of Democracy*, 31.

7. *Abilene Gazette*, April 4, 1884.

8. Deed Book S, p. 628, Register of Deeds, Dickinson County Courthouse, Abilene, Kans. The legal description of the property was City of Hope, Lot 7, Block 5; Mortgage Book 2, p. 596, Register of Deeds, Dickinson County Courthouse. The farm was in section 34 of Ridge Township, about one mile north of Hope.

2. *Ibid.*, 36-37.

3. Edgar Eisenhower's statement is in John McCallum, *Six Roads from Abilene* (Seattle: Wood and Reber, 1960), 18, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1967), 31.

4. *Hope Herald*, April 4, 1885.

1. Kenneth Davis, *Soldier of Democracy: A Biography of Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1945), 553-54.



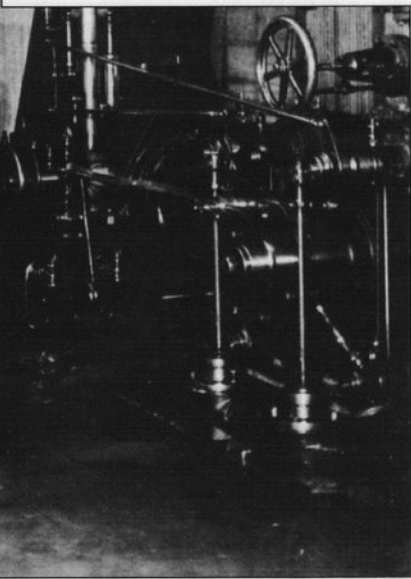
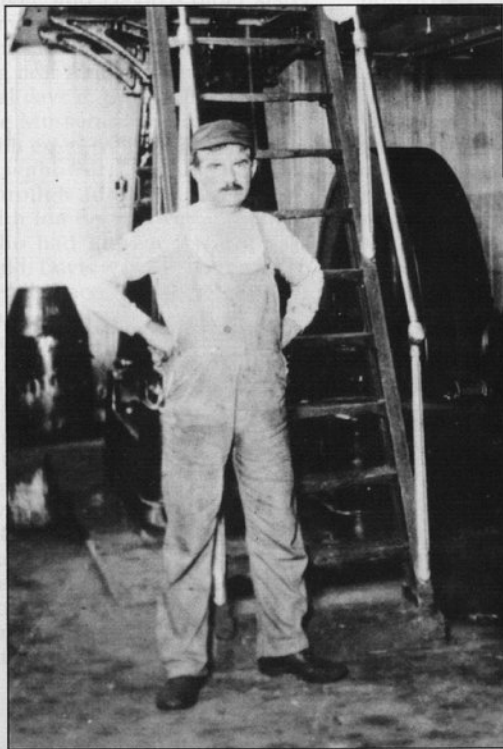
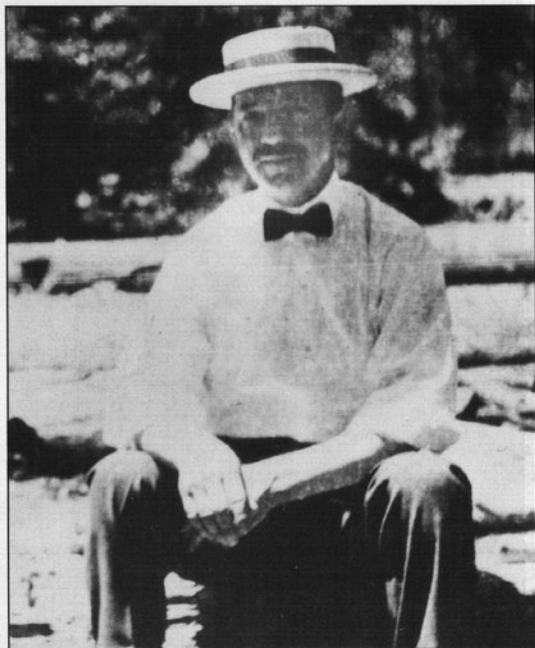
Wedding picture of David Eisenhower and Ida Stover who were married in September 1885, just five months following the opening of the Good and Eisenhower store in Hope.



Milton D. Good at age twenty-one. This portrait was taken ca. 1882, about the time Good settled in Abilene, Kansas. Three years later, he formed his partnership with David Eisenhower.

The story of the Good-Eisenhower partnership was first published around the end of World War II. As the years passed, the story grew in popularity without losing its original charm. Eisenhower achieved international fame as supreme allied commander in Europe, which produced popular accounts of his life, the

Following the demise of the partnership, David Eisenhower (below) remained with the Hope store, then journeyed to Texas only to return to Dickinson County in 1892. He is shown here at his job in the Belle Springs Creamery in Abilene. Milton Good (right) tried several business ventures in Abilene before taking employment in 1893 as a traveling salesman. He is shown here in Wyoming on one of his many business travels.



a store, he needed the assistance of an experienced partner—thus, the partnership was formed with Milton D. Good.

Milton Good was born in York County, Pennsylvania, June 17, 1860, grew up on a farm, and, as a youth, began working in a store in Reading, Pennsylvania. In 1882, he moved to Abilene where he worked as a clerk in Sterl & Zahner's Dry Goods Store until entering into the partnership with David Eisenhower in March 1885.⁹

Both men were bachelors when they settled in Hope. Not long after starting their store, however, they both married and started families. On July 29, 1885, Milton married Anna Gleissner, daughter of John and Anna Gleissner, Bavarian immigrants who had settled in Abilene in 1875.¹⁰ On September 23, 1885, David married Ida E. Stover whom he had met while attending Lane University. A native of Augusta County, Virginia, Ida had moved to Kansas after the death of her parents to live with her older brother near LeCompton.¹¹ Both women proved to be loyal spouses and bravely supported their husbands through the trials that afflicted their lives.

While David's and Milton's domestic lives were apparently stable, their partnership was less enduring. The two men proved to have markedly different personalities which quickly led to friction between them. Something of a recluse, Eisenhower seldom

involved himself in community affairs. A violent temper was one of his most distinctive traits, and he administered all the corporal punishments in his family. In later years, his sons recalled with awe the beatings they had received at his hands. One memorable occasion involved his son Edgar who had begun leaving school early to earn spending money at a part-time job. When David learned of his son's truancy, he became enraged and whipped Edgar with a leather strap. The boy was rescued by a fearful Dwight who told his father that not even a dog should receive such a beating.¹²

David's rages were not confined to members of his own family. On December 5, 1896, in what was probably a fit of anger, David seized a young member of the Charles Shane family and administered a sound spanking. The boy ran home and reported the incident to his father who filed a complaint with the police. Charged with assault and battery, David was arrested, put in the Abilene city jail, and was released only after paying a fine.¹³

David's care and concern for his money was another significant aspect of his character. In later years, his sons recalled their father's dislike for incurring bills. "You couldn't carry a bill over . . . every single bill had to be paid," remembered Earl Eisenhower. David's precision with his accounts that "balanced to the penny" was likely another point of contention in the Good-Eisenhower partnership.¹⁴

12. Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 31, 36.

13. *Abilene Daily Reflector*, December 5, 7, 1896.

14. Bela Kornitzer, *The Great American Heritage: The Story of the Five Eisenhower Brothers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955), 21.

In contrast to David Eisenhower, Milton Good was congenial and outgoing, and frequently participated in local events.¹⁵ Described as an "enterprising" and "handsome townsman," Good was active in community service projects and was sometimes able to involve his more reserved and probably somewhat reluctant partner. One such incident occurred in the spring of 1886 when an opera house was built in Hope. Milton volunteered to provide an "advertising drop curtain" for the stage, and to raise the money he solicited donations from local businessmen. In exchange for their financial support, their business cards would be painted on the curtain as a form of advertising. Milton contracted with a merchant and a "scenic artist," both from Abilene, to have the curtain designed and constructed. When the work was completed, Milton Good received "all the credit" for the success of the project while David Eisenhower had the thankless task of traveling to Abilene to retrieve the curtain and bring it back to Hope.¹⁶

Within a few months, another incident occurred which could not have helped endear the partners to each other. In the summer of 1886, a group of Hope businessmen, including Good, organized a building and loan association to help stimulate economic development in their community. Milton, one of the first subscribers, pledged one thousand dollars for ten shares to help get the association started. When it

15. *Hope Dispatch*, October 15, 1886.

16. *Ibid.*, April 30, June 4, 1886.

9. Biography of Milton Good, *Hope Herald*, February 11, 1886. His birthdate is taken from his obituary, *Emporia Gazette*, September 24, 1917.

10. *Hope Herald*, August 1, 1885. For biographical data on John and Anna Gleissner, see their obituaries in *Abilene Weekly Reflector*, August 13, 1896, and June 12, 1902.

11. *Hope Herald*, October 10, 1885.

came time to pay off his commitment, however, Milton produced only five hundred dollars for five shares; the remainder was assumed by David Eisenhower.¹⁷

Given David's temperament, he likely became quickly dissatisfied with his partner's many, and at times costly, community projects. To further exacerbate what seems to have been an increasingly troubled relationship, Milton pursued plans for a business outside the partnership. On August 27, 1886, the *Hope Dispatch* reported that Milton was "working on a little scheme that is liable to make him a Vanderbilt in wealth." The nature of this "scheme," which has long puzzled historians, was revealed when a patent application was discovered among the records of the U.S. Patent Office; the application, dated October 23, 1886, was by Milton Good.¹⁸ His patent was for a floor clamp, a standard carpenter's tool, but one that Milton had modified for easier use. His application, however, was rejected by the patent office on the grounds that it was too similar to the standard model. After receiving the rejection, Milton produced a second, more radical modification which he submitted on February 11, 1887. The second application was accepted, and Milton's patent was issued on April 12, 1887.¹⁹

17. *Ibid.*, July 16, September 24, 1886.

18. Application in Patent File 361,060, Records of the U.S. Patent Office, Record Group 241, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Md.

19. Applications and correspondence in Patent File 361,060, Washington National Records Center.

Milton undoubtedly hoped to market his new floor clamp, his own store perhaps making an ideal marketing vehicle. But less than two weeks after his initial patent application, the Good-Eisenhower partnership came to an end. Like the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, Milton's latest scheme undoubtedly convinced David that the time had come to terminate their relationship. On November 4, 1886, having endured his partner's indulgences for a year and a half, Eisenhower issued the following notice: "This is to certify that I have this day bought all the interest in the late firm of Good & Eisenhower, thereby releasing M. D. Good from all responsibilities of the late firm."²⁰

An obvious question is how David raised the money to buy Milton's share of the business. A clue appears in the Dickinson County chattel mortgage records. On November 2, 1886, Good & Eisenhower mortgaged their entire stock of goods to Jacob Eisenhower for \$3,500. Three days later, Jacob Eisenhower released Good & Eisenhower from repaying the money, thus in effect converting the mortgage into an outright gift.²¹ It would appear that Jacob had provided the funds by which David could buy out his partner. Milton's place in the business was taken over by Abraham L. Eisenhower, David's younger brother, and the store's name was changed to Eisenhower Brothers.²²

Once out of the partnership, Milton did not, as the traditional

20. *Hope Dispatch*, November 5, 1886.

21. Chattel Mortgage Record, Book O, p. 74, Archives Division, Dickinson County Historical Society, Abilene.

22. *Hope Dispatch*, November 5, 19, 1886.

story would have us believe, disappear from Hope leaving David to face the creditors. Apparently well-liked in the community, Good was encouraged by the *Dispatch* "to spend the remainder of his natural days" there, regardless of the type of business he chose to pursue. It is likely, however, that Good lingered in Hope out of consideration for his wife who was pregnant and approaching confinement. During the next month, he made several trips to Abilene and managed to secure his old job in the Sterl & Zahner Dry Goods Store. On November 29, 1886, Mrs. Good gave birth to a baby girl, and on December 20, the Good family moved their household belongings to Abilene.²³

The dissolution of the Good-Eisenhower partnership was not without controversy. Shortly after Milton's departure, David brought suit against him for fifty dollars before G. B. Barrett, the justice of the peace for Hope. On January 17, 1887, Justice Barrett decided in David's favor, but Milton refused to comply with the court-ordered payment, and David was never able to collect the debt. Undoubtedly David's attitude could not have improved toward his ex-partner.²⁴

Although Milton was unsuccessful in his efforts to market his floor clamp, he remained active in community affairs after his

23. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1886; *Hope Herald*, December 23, 1886.

24. The justice of the peace records for Hope were destroyed in a fire in 1958. However, in October 1888, shortly before leaving for Texas, David Eisenhower had the judgment recorded at the courthouse in Abilene. By making it a matter of record, the earlier action could be used as a precedent if David decided to pursue further legal action against Milton. See Appearance Docket B, p. 236, District Court Records, Dickinson County Courthouse.

return to Abilene and eventually entered into politics. In July 1887, he announced his candidacy for Register of Deeds of Dickinson County on the Democratic ticket, and for the next several weeks campaigned actively for the position.²⁵ His campaign included a tour through the southern part of Dickinson County, including a stop at Hope to "mend his political fences."²⁶ At the Democratic county convention on September 3, however, Milton was not able to raise enough support to gain the nomination. Mrs. Genevieve Cowles captured the prize, but she was defeated in the general election by Republican candidate Walter Nichols.²⁷

After Good's removal to Abilene, David continued to manage the store in Hope for almost two years—again, a direct contradiction to the traditional story that portrays a humiliated David Eisenhower fleeing to Texas. His brother Abraham remained in the business even longer and, as a veterinarian, set up his office in one corner of the store building. Their father, who owned the property, also assisted in the store operations. In April 1887, Jacob Eisenhower rented a portion of the store to E. A. Gehrig of Salina who opened a bakery and remained until November 1887 when he moved his bakery to larger quarters elsewhere in Hope. Although the vacancy was quickly filled, later events indicated that David Eisenhower was angry at Gehrig for moving out of the building.²⁸

E. A. Gehrig was not successful in his new location and, by

January 1888, was experiencing financial difficulties. On Saturday, January 21, several creditors descended on his bakery and forced him to turn over a portion of his stock to satisfy their claims. The action did not affect Gehrig's entire stock, and he was able to continue in business. That same weekend, however, rumors about his financial problems began to circulate in Hope. It was claimed that his creditors had forced him into bankruptcy and his store had been closed. So pervasive did the rumors become that Gehrig published a notice in the newspaper stating he was open for business at his usual location. Knowing the source of the rumors, Gehrig was quick to denounce the perpetrator: "The report that I have been closed," he wrote, "was given circulation by David Eisenhower, whose malice toward me, because I recently removed from his building, is a matter of general knowledge."²⁹

At first it appeared that Gehrig would recover from his financial setbacks. The *Hope Herald* reported that he owed only \$250 or \$300 and would probably be able to pay off his debts within a few weeks. Unfortunately, Gehrig was unable to raise the money despite a four-month-long struggle. In June 1888, his business failed, and Gehrig left Hope in search of more favorable opportunities.³⁰

In the meantime, Gehrig's vacancy in the Eisenhower store had been filled by the Oyster & Goodman meat market, a business characterized by a rapid turnover in ownership. Oyster & Goodman became Croll & Good-

man, which became Groesbeck & Goodman. Finally, in March 1888, B. W. Groesbeck bought out his partner and moved the meat market to another building in Hope.³¹ It was during this period that David Eisenhower was losing interest in the store and began looking for new employment. On December 1, 1887, the *Hope Herald* reported that he was planning an extended trip south to seek a new location. In July 1888, he made a trip to Kansas City and St. Joseph, Missouri, but decided to temporarily remain in Hope.³² It was not until October 1888, that David withdrew from his business, leaving Hope for good and going to Denison, Texas, where he had secured a railroad position. Abraham Eisenhower became the store manager renaming the business "A. L. Eisenhower & Company." David's wife, Ida, who was pregnant, and their son Arthur remained in Hope for the winter and lived with Abraham.³³

Jacob and Abraham Eisenhower eventually disposed of the store, selling it to Shockey & Snider hardware dealers of Abilene in February 1889. With his wife, Jacob moved to Abilene in March while Ida and her two sons went to Texas in April to join David. Abraham remained in Hope briefly to dispose of his veterinary clinic but eventually followed his parents to Abilene.³⁴

31. Advertisements in *Hope Herald* from November 10, 1887, to March 29, 1888.

32. *Hope Dispatch*, July 18, 25, 1888.

33. *Hope Herald*, October 18, 1888; *Hope Dispatch*, January 25, 1889.

34. *Hope Herald*, February 7, March 7, 1889; *Hope Dispatch*, April 12, 1889. For Abraham Eisenhower's later career, see Gladys Dodd, "The Early Career of Abraham L. Eisenhower, Pioneer Preacher," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 29 (Autumn 1963): 233-49.

25. *Hope Dispatch*, July 26, 1887.

26. *Hope Herald*, August 18, 1887.

27. Democratic County Convention proceedings, *Abilene Weekly Reflector*, September 8, 1887.

28. *Hope Herald*, April 7, November 10, 1887.

29. *Ibid.*, January 26, 1888.

30. *Ibid.*, January 26, June 7, December 27, 1888.

David Eisenhower spent over two years in Denison, but he kept in touch with his relatives in Abilene and was interested in moving back to the area if he could find a job to support his growing family. When his mother died in June 1890, David and Arthur came north for the funeral. Before returning to Texas they spent some time in Hope visiting friends.³⁵

Finally, in early 1892, David's brother-in-law Christian O. Musser obtained an engineering job for David at the Belle Springs Creamery in Abilene. David moved his family to Abilene and began work on March 11, 1892.³⁶ For six years the family lived on Southeast Second Street, and in 1898 they moved to Southeast Fourth Street where David and Ida spent the remainder of their lives.³⁷

When the Eisenhowers returned to Dickinson County in 1892, Milton Good was still living in Abilene. In June of that year, he made another attempt to manage a dry goods store entering into a partnership with Calvin G. Hawk and opening M. D. Good & Company in downtown Abilene. The store was originally in the Hazlett Block on Broadway Street, but in December it was moved to the Hamaker Building near the northeast corner of Second and Cedar streets.³⁸

35. *Hope Herald*, June 26, 1890. Ida, who was pregnant with their third son Dwight, remained in Texas with Edgar, who was seventeen months old.

36. Paul D. Hoffman, *Chronicle of the Belle Springs Creamery Company* (Abilene, Kans.: Abilene Printing Co., 1975), 7-8.

37. The Eisenhower residence on Southeast Fourth Street is now on the grounds of the Eisenhower Center and is maintained by the U.S. government.

38. *Abilene Weekly Reflector*, June 9, December 29, 1892.

In late December 1892, about the time Good's store was moved, David Eisenhower sued Milton in an attempt to obtain the fifty dollars that Milton had not paid him in January 1887. Milton did not defend himself, and in February 1893 the Dickinson County District Court ruled for Eisenhower. The original amount had grown to \$75.74 which included court costs and interest. Once again Milton did not pay and David was unable to recover the debt.³⁹

Economic conditions in central Kansas, as was the case throughout the country, were not conducive to the success of Milton's new store. The state's agricultural economy had already endured several years of bad weather and general decline; now the entire nation slid into a severe economic depression, triggered in part by the "Panic of 1893." Only a few months after the store opened, Good and Hawk began to experience financial difficulties and were unable to make enough money through sales to pay their bills. Unlike David Eisenhower, Milton had no generous relatives to help finance his business ventures. In September 1893, he was forced to borrow \$3,000 from the private Abilene bank of Thomas Kirby. To secure the loan Milton signed a promissory note agreeing to repay the money by the following March.⁴⁰

The money from the Kirby Bank brought only temporary respite, and Milton soon found himself more deeply in debt.

39. *Eisenhower v. Good*, case file 2966, District Court Records, Dickinson County Courthouse.

40. The note was used as evidence in Kirby's later lawsuit, see *Kirby v. Good, et al*, case file 3151, District Court Records, Dickinson County Courthouse.

When he attempted to raise money by selling large blocks of merchandise from the store, his creditors became alarmed. On November 7, 1893, Thomas Kirby brought suit against him in district court, claiming that Good was disposing of his property in an effort to avoid paying his creditors. Milton filed a deposition denying the allegation, and Kirby eventually dropped the suit.⁴¹

On November 9, evident that he could no longer hold off his creditors, Good put up all the store assets in the form of a chattel mortgage as security to cover his debts. As soon as the creditors received the mortgage they foreclosed and thereby gained control of the store.⁴² Good was nearly ruined by the failure of his latest mercantile venture and was forced to take a job as a traveling salesman. He and his family moved in with his wife's parents, John and Anna Gleissner, at the Gleissner home in Abilene.⁴³

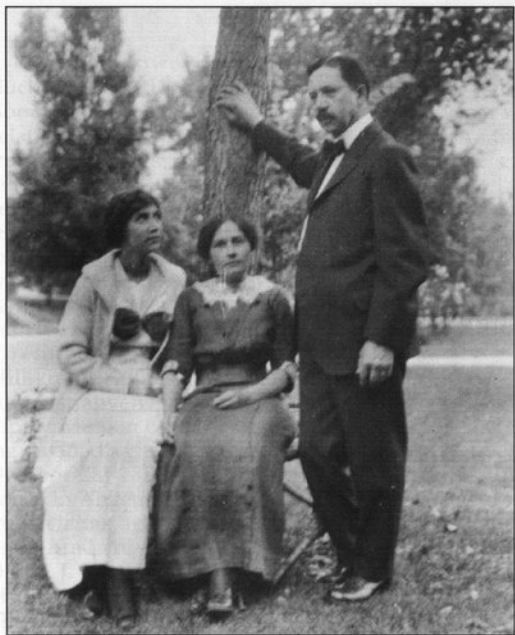
Despite the family's circumstances, Milton continued to be pursued by his creditors. In November 1897, Thomas Kirby again brought suit against him seeking to recover the \$3,000 loan that had never been repaid. Good made no attempt to defend himself, and the district court found for Kirby.⁴⁴ It was a pyrrhic victory, however, as Good was unable to pay the judgment.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Chattel Mortgage Record*, Book 5, p. 86-87, Archives Division, Dickinson County Historical Society; *Abilene Weekly Reflector*, November 16, 1893.

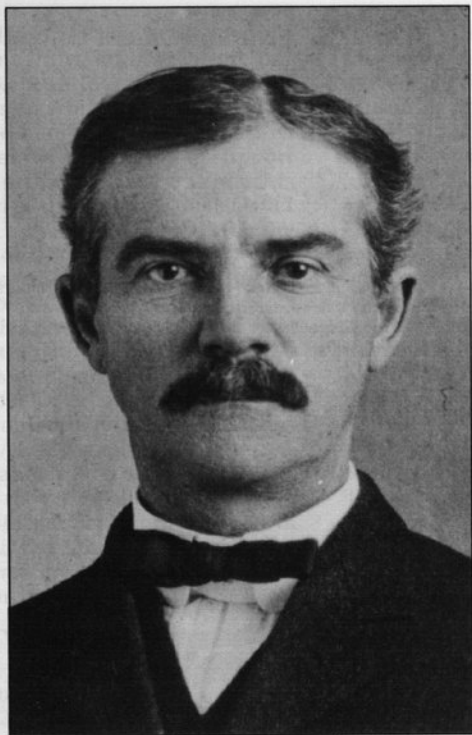
43. The 1895 state census of Abilene shows the Goods living with the Gleissners. Milton Good was listed as a "commercial traveler." Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

44. *Kirby v. Good*, case file 3698, District Court Records, Dickinson County Courthouse.



Good (left) and Eisenhower (below) in later years with their families: With Milton are his wife's sister Eva Gleissner (center) and his daughter Rose. With Eisenhower are his wife, Ida, and three of his sons (left to right) Milton, Dwight, and Earl.





David J. Eisenhower

Over fifty years after the Good-Eisenhower partnership dissolved, controversy over their business dealings again surfaced. Although inaccurate accounts imply otherwise, the controversy involved no villains and no heroes—only two businessmen seeking their own versions of success.



Milton D. Good

In 1898, however, a bit of "luck" presented itself to Milton Good. The U.S. Congress, in a belated attempt to provide relief from the depression, passed a federal bankruptcy law which became effective on September 1, 1898. Milton was one of the first in Dickinson County to file for bankruptcy under the new law. As was customary in such cases, the U.S. District Court appointed a referee, in this case Z. C. Millikin of Salina, to handle the administrative work in the bankruptcy. Millikin called for a meeting of Good's creditors to be held October 28, 1898, at the courthouse in Abilene. At the meeting three claims against Good were presented including one by David J. Eisenhower. Aware of Milton's financial difficulties, Eisenhower used the bankruptcy proceedings to make one final attempt to obtain the money Good owed him. The original fifty dollar judgment had grown to eighty-three dollars, including interest and court costs.⁴⁵

Milton's creditors were unsuccessful in their efforts to recover their money. A trustee, appointed by Millikin to inventory Good's property, found that his sole remaining assets were \$400 worth of household furniture which was exempt from seizure under terms of the new law. On March 27, 1899, Milton Good was declared bankrupt, and the case was closed. His creditors received nothing.⁴⁶

Following completion of the bankruptcy proceedings, Milton

moved his family to Kansas City, Missouri, where they lived for several years while he continued to work as a traveling salesman.⁴⁷ Toward the end of his life, he contracted a liver ailment which necessitated his retirement, and he returned to Kansas to spend his last days with his family. Milton Good died in Emporia at the home of his daughter on September 23, 1917.⁴⁸

As is evident in the foregoing events, Milton Good may not have been one of Kansas' best late-nineteenth-century entrepreneurs, but neither was he the villainous business partner of Eisenhower lore. Good did not drive the Hope store into bankruptcy; neither did he disappear from Hope, forcing his partner to leave Kansas in shame. Following the dissolution of the partnership, David operated the reorganized store for almost two years; Milton remained in Hope until he resettled in nearby Abilene where he lived for another dozen years. Why, then, has Milton gained such an unfortunate reputation?

The responsibility for Milton's tarnished reputation undoubtedly lies with David Eisenhower who appears to have been more vindictive than historians have realized. Numerous events confirm his violent temper, and the Gehrig incident demonstrates that he was capable of circulating malicious rumors about persons

with whom he disagreed. It should not be surprising that Eisenhower and Good, men with markedly different personalities, had a stormy personal and business relationship; some of David's complaints were legitimate, and it would have been easy, and entirely in character, for David to exaggerate and distort Milton's role in their ill-fated partnership.

When historians began studying the Eisenhower family history after David's death, the older Eisenhower generation, even those who may have known the truth, probably repeated David's stories out of loyalty to his memory. The younger generation, represented by the President and his brothers, who were not alive at the time of the partnership, could only repeat what they had been told by their elders. Unfortunately for the Good family, the fame of one Eisenhower offspring dictated that only the Eisenhowers' story was made public. By relying solely on Eisenhower family tradition, historians obtained and perpetuated a distorted view of the Good-Eisenhower partnership.

This study, based on new research, attempts to set the record straight; the result is a more balanced, albeit less dramatic, story of a failed business venture and the Eisenhower sojourn in Texas. As is often the case, the Good-Eisenhower conflict renders no heroes, no villains; just two young nineteenth-century businessmen and their families seeking and struggling with their own versions of success. KH

45. Milton Good bankruptcy file, docket number 25, 1898 Bankruptcy Law Series, Records of the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas, National Archives, Central Plains Branch, Kansas City, Mo.

46. *Ibid.*

47. The 1900 federal census shows the Goods living at 3243 Perry Street, Kansas City, Mo. (v. 44, district 70, sheet 13, line 29).

48. Obituaries of Milton Good in *Emporia Gazette*, September 24, 1917, and *Abilene Weekly Reflector*, September 27, 1917.